

**ACTION RESEARCH: UNDERSTANDING
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ENGLISH
PREMIER LEAGUE FOOTBALL IN THE
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT
INTERVENTION**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Liverpool John Moores University for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

This research programme was carried out in collaboration with
Everton in the Community.

June 2014

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis is entirely my own. Some of the work has been submitted to academic journals, book chapters and presented at regional, national and European and International conference and are listed below:

Journal Publications

Parnell, D., Stratton, G., Drust, B., & Richardson, D. (2013) Football in the Community Programmes: Exploring the Effectiveness of an Intervention in Promoting Positive Healthful Behaviour Change, Soccer and Society. 14, 1. Available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14660970.2012.692678>

Book chapters

Parnell, D., Stratton, G., Drust, B., & Richardson, D. (2013) Implementing 'Monitoring and Evaluation' Techniques within a Premier League Football in the Community Programme: A Case Study Involving Everton in the Community, In the "Routledge Handbook of Sport and Corporate Social Responsibility. Published 5th July, available online here: <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415783057/>

Invited Symposia

Richardson, D., Burgess, T., Newland, A., Watson, L., Bingham, D.D. & Parnell, D. (2011) Football as an Agent for Social Change, European College of Sport Science 16th Annual Conference, Liverpool, UK, 9th July. Richardson: Oral.

Littlewood, M., Parnell, D., & Richardson, D. (2011) The Role of a Football Club in a Local Community, Seoul International Conference on Science and Football, Kwanggyeto Hall, Sejong University (The Korean Society of Science and Football), Korea, 1st June. Littlewood: Oral.

Conferences

Dunn, K. and **Parnell, D.** (2012) Football as a vehicle for social change: reflections from the field. Football and its Communities Conference, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. 1st June, 2012. ORAL.

Parnell, D., Stratton, G., Drust, B. & Richardson, D. (2011) The Role of the Community Coach in Enabling Healthful Change through a Premier league Community Football Programme, European College of Sport Science 16th Annual Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7th July. ORAL

*ECSS Young Investigator Award nominee

Parnell, D., Stratton, G., Drust, B. & Richardson, D. (2011) The Role of the Community Coach in Enabling Healthful Change through a Premier League Community Football Programme, ECSS Pre Conference Symposium: Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Interventions for Children and Young People, LJMU, UK, 5th July. Parnell: POSTER.

Parnell, D., Drust, B., Stratton, G. & Richardson, D. (2010) Making it Happen: The Role of Participatory Action Research in Facilitating Positive Behavioural Change in an English Premier League Football Club's Community Programme, European Association for Sports Management 18th Annual Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, 16th September. Parnell: ORAL.

*EASM New Researcher Award Nominee.

Parnell, D., Drust, B., Stratton, G. & Richardson, D. (2010) Football as a Vehicle for Behaviour and Lifestyle Change: A Biopsychosocial Exploration of an English Premier League Football Club's Community Programme, European College of Sports Science 15th Annual Conference, Antalya, Turkey. 25th June. Parnell: POSTER.

*ECSS Young Investigator Award Nominee.

Parnell, D., Drust, B., Stratton, G. & Richardson, D. (2009) The Everton Active Family Centre, The Everton Active Family Centre Health Seminar, Goodison Park, England, UK, 18th November. Parnell: ORAL.

Parnell, D., Drust, B., Stratton, G. & Richardson, D. (2009) Understanding the Culture of a Football in the Community Programme through Action Research: The Role of the Researcher in Facilitating Change, European Association of Sports Management 17th Annual Conference, Amsterdam, Netherlands. 18th September. Parnell: ORAL.

Parnell, D., Drust, B., Stratton, G. & Richardson, D. (2009) Football in the Community: Understanding the Effectiveness of a Community Based Coaching Initiative, British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences Annual Conference, Leeds Met. 2nd September. Parnell: ORAL.

Parnell, D., Drust, B., Stratton, G. & Richardson, D. (2008) Football in the Community: Effective Community Engagement, European Association of Sports Management 16th Annual Conference, Heidelberg, Germany. 11th September. Parnell: ORAL.

*EASM New Researcher Award Nominee.

Richardson, D., Drust, B., Stratton, G., Gilbourne, D. & Parnell, D. (2007) Football in the Community: A Collaborative Venture, *European Association of Sports Management 15th Annual Conference*, Turin, Italy. 12-15th September. Richardson: ORAL.

Abstract

This thesis outlines research undertaken by formal collaboration between Everton Football Club's Football in the Community (FitC) scheme; Everton in the Community (EitC) and Liverpool John Moores University.

In recent years, there has been recognition of the influence that English Premier League football clubs can have in attending to the health improvement agenda through football-based community-coaching interventions. Few FitC programmes have suitable evaluation procedures in place, there remains limited evaluative empirical evidence.

Study 1 (reconnaissance phases) adopted multi-method approach within an action research framework to explore the effectiveness of a health improvement intervention for children (June 2006-July 2007). Results showed most children had a fun and enjoyable time, however there were some negative comments regarding coaching practice. Strategic and operational issues were highlighted that limited the effectiveness of the intervention.

Study 2 (action planning) adopted a focus group meeting approach to disseminate the findings from Study 1 with senior management of EitC to reflect, discuss and highlight change strategies to improve the effectiveness of future health improvement interventions.

Study 3 (implementation and monitoring phase) extended the principles of ethnography adopted throughout the thesis in line with action research to facilitate the change strategy within EitC on behalf of senior management. Results highlight individual, social, political, ethical and contextual barriers emerged during the facilitation of the change strategy, leading to the shift in key change person (i.e., gatekeepers) from senior management to a community coach. Positive changes were achieved, although not the initial change strategy agreed.

Key findings highlight the usefulness of ethnographic approaches in understanding and facilitating the complexity of change involved in action research. It is recommended that commissioners should encourage FitC programmes to engage in evaluation and organisational development initiatives.

Acknowledgements

Trying to write this acknowledgement section is becoming an increasingly challenging task given the duration and scope of the PhD. When I would instead like to thank these people individually, personally and genuinely. I would rather thank each of these truly amazing people in ways that return their selfless favours, in an attempt to let each of them know how important their input, time, understanding and in many cases compassion has been for me. Despite this, providing this formal recognition and ‘acknowledgement’ of those significant people is needed. The friendships created and nurtured throughout this journey will last and never stop.

To begin, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Everton Football Club, Everton in the Community, the team, past and present, the schools, teachers and of course the children for access to their World and lives. You have provided me with unforgettable experiences that will last with me forever.

Ian Pegg and Greggs North West, for their funding, support and ambition in the development of this research. Entering and attempting to address a real social issue in Liverpool at the frontline of their core business shows the historic community roots of the business and a genuine desire to help others.

Tim Cable and Keith George, for their support and patience during my time at LJMU. The opportunities afforded to young researchers are second to none. I am privileged to have experienced some amazing conferences and been part of many great projects, for which I am truly grateful.

LJMU. There are genuinely too many people to thank from the teams I have worked within and around including EAFC, GOALS, A-CLASS, SmokeFree Sports, Liverpool Sporting Playground – the support and camaraderie is what makes LJMU great. Other significant people that have acted as a critical friend throughout this process within the academic team have helped me become the researcher I am today – you know who you are. George Savage for always making problems disappear – thank you. To Louise Coyne for always being there to help me since 2006, you are a star! To Mark Nesti, Hugo Relvas and Martin Littlewood, Denise Goodwin for being friends, reminding me that family comes first, nothing is black and white, to challenge everything and enjoy conferences in good style.

At this point, I would like to recognise and provide a special thanks to the late Tom Reilly. Everyone who knows Tom and have had the pleasure to spend time in his company talks so highly of him. His memory and written work certainly influenced and influences Sport Science today, but more importantly *people* talk about his character. I believe Tom has profoundly impacted people within Sport Science today – I will continue to look for more people like Tom to share my time with, in academia and life. A genuine approach and support for young researchers (especially fellow Evertonians) is something I will also be sure to incorporate into my approach moving forward in academia!

More recently, I would like to thank my outstanding colleagues at the University of Derby for their continued support and friendship.

To the supervisory team, Gareth Stratton and Barry Drust. It’s been a true pleasure working with you both for so many years. You are each roles models to me, for your approach to research and scholarship in your respective areas. Without doubt, since being an undergraduate student, your support has had a huge influence on me. Thank you so much for helping me through this process.

To Mum and Dad, Mum for constantly asking me when I will be finishing and Dad for not ever asking me anything about my PhD. I love you both.

To my family and friends for helping me enjoy life and make any problems look insignificant. I love you all. Especially, Aunty Shirley for looking after me with exams in the early days and supporting Sarah and I continually. I need to also mention Dean Stewart, who is always there for me and the family – a true friend.

Kathryn Dunny (Curran), you are a special person in my life and you will be forever. Thank you for always being there and I am looking forward to many great achievements and adventures we will have together in academia and life!

Dave Richardson *the* supervisor, I cannot describe what an impact you have had on me professionally and personally. Your level of ethics, morals and integrity is inspiring (to bordering obscene). Whilst I loose words to describe what I want to say, the key thing is that, you - have helped create a better life for my family. For this, my respect for you is second to none. From me, Sarah and the kids – thank you.

Niamh and George you are everything to me. The cuddles, kisses, kicks and tears are what it's all about. I love you both.

Finally, thank you Sarah (Tay). You joined this journey and have been through every high and low. Your love and pragmatic approach to deal with everything has helped me get through this process. Keeping me focused and happy cannot have been easy (this may not get easier), but thank you. This means so much to me. My focus is now on supporting you through your studies before enjoying the rest of our lives together. This and everything is all for our family.

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Introduction

The following chapter provides both a theoretical and contextual backdrop for the thesis. The chapter opens by discussing the developing role that sport and physical activity play in tackling social change and specifically promoting health alongside a detailing current state of health and an examination of public policy that has been introduced to tackle health through sport and physical activity. Decision making and evidence on the role of football as a vehicle for health promotion is presented. Finally, the chapter examines the current literature concerning the role of Football Clubs and their respective Football in the Community (FitC) programmes in community sport, and their potential as a vehicle to promote health through community football programmes. The benefits of promoting health through football and the contextual challenges are also presented.

Physical activity: the state of play

Physical activity is defined as,

"...any force exerted by skeletal muscle that results in energy expenditure above resting level" and includes "...the full range of human movement, from competitive sport and exercise to active hobbies, walking and cycling or activities of daily living"

(DoH, 2004a, p.81).

Lack of physical activity alongside poor nutrition and smoking is classed within the top three modifiable risk factors for non-communicable disease and premature death (WHO, 2003). Engaging in physical activity has the potential to benefit life expectancy alongside a number of physical, psychological and social benefits (Biddle, 2000; Bull et al., 2004; DoH, 2004; Hamer et al., 2009; CMO, 2010; 2011). Incorporating moderate to vigorous activity¹ into daily living for a minimum of 30 minutes per day as an adult and 1 hour for a child on at least five days of the

¹Moderate physical activity refers to engaging in activities that are raise your heart rate and you feel warmer, but are still being able to carry on a conversation. In comparison people engaging in vigorous physical activity will breath more rapidly (further increased heart rate), likely to break into a sweat and will only be able to speak in short phrases.

week (accumulated in bouts of at least 10 minutes) has been identified as crucial for individual wellbeing (DoH, 2004a; CMO, 2010). There are a range of health related areas of fitness that can benefit through increased engagement in physical activity such as reduced mortality rates, a decreased risk of chronic disease and improve psychological wellbeing, including reduced anxiety, depression, enhanced mood and self-esteem (Fox, 1999; Biddle, 2000; Bull et al., 2004; DoH, 2004a; Hamer et al., 2009; CMO, 2010). It is no surprise that physical inactivity is a major public health issue.

Physical inactivity is commonly associated with an increased risk of obesity, coronary heart disease, hypertension, osteoporosis, cancer, depression and anxiety (CMO, 2010). Evidence has shown that the risk of developing stroke and type 2 diabetes is reduced by up to 50% and premature death by 20-30% in people who are physically active to recommended levels (DoH, 2004). Within national and international reports have highlighted that health is in decline in a number of countries (WHO, 2003) contributing to rapid increases in non-communicable disease (DoH, 2004a). Obesity is one of the most visible of these non-communicable diseases to appear globally and more locally within the United Kingdom.

In 2008 it was reported that in England 66% of men and 57% of women were overweight or obese, and almost a quarter of adults (24% of men and 25% of women) were obese (NHS, 2009). At present physical inactivity (in the UK) costs the NHS up to £1.8 billion per year (CMO, 2010). This evidence suggests that if we do not tackle the rise of non communicable diseases and address unhealthy lifestyles it could be detrimental to the overall health of the nation (CMO, 2010). The promotion of physical activity is an integral factor in reducing health inequalities and was recognised throughout the *2009 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer*, (CMO, 2010), where the Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson stated that

“The potential benefits of physical activity to health are huge. If a medication existed which had a similar effect, it would be regarded as a 'wonder drug' or 'miracle cure’”
(p.21).

Within England the Active People Survey reported that only 21.6% of the population in England participate in 30 minutes of physical activity on at least 3 days per week, excluding active travel (Sport England, 2009). With active transport included the *Health Survey for England* (NHS, 2009) reports slightly higher self-reported physical activity levels. Specifically, the report highlights that 39% of men and 29% of women meet the minimum recommendations for adults of 30 minutes of moderate activity on at least 5 days per week. Both of these studies used self-report measures, however the Health Survey for England also undertook some objective measures for actual physical activity levels using accelerometers. The results found that only 6% of men and 4% of women met the current recommendations for physical activity. The data suggests that a very small percentage of the populations is accruing enough physical activity to benefit their health. Therefore tackling inactivity and promoting increased physical activity poses a growing challenge for governments and individuals (CMO, 2010; Gidlow et al., 2010). With this in mind, there appears to be a need to not solely focus on medical treatment to prolong human survival, and focus more attention on preventative care to promote positive physical and psychological health (DoH, 2004a). Sport has been championed as vehicle to help deliver physical activity and promote health.

Sport and social change

“Sport can play a role in improving the lives of individuals, not only individuals... but whole communities. I am convinced that the time is right to build on that understanding, to encourage more governments, development agencies and communities to think how sport can be included more systematically in the plans...”

(Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, quoted by UNICEF, 2004)

The association between sport and human development goes back as far as the Ancient Greek Olympic movement, where sport has been linked to both personal and social development. Today sport is enshrined in UNESCOs (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) international charter on physical education and sport (1978) and in the 1989

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The charter explicitly specifies that every human being has a right of access to physical education and that sport is essential for the full development of his or her personality. The CRC calls on all state parties to actively promote the right to play.

The use of sport for development has increased in momentum as a result of the United Nations (UN) unequivocal support. At the Millennium Summit in September 2000 during the largest gathering of world leaders in history, leaders adopted the UN Millennium Declaration. Thus committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015 that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN, 2012). In 2002, the UN set up an ‘Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace’ to explore the contribution that sport can make towards achieving the MDGs. The following report concluded that “well-designed sport-based initiatives are practical and cost-effective tools to achieve objectives in peace and development.” (2003) based on assertions rather than an evidence base (Coalter, 2007). The report presented sport as an effective tool for social mobilisation, a significant economic force, and that it provides healthy alternatives to harmful actions (such as drug abuse and crime), improves academic performance, supports conflict prevention and is a ‘compelling tool’ for advocacy and communications on top of fostering life skills, physical and emotional health and a vehicle to support health activities (including HIV education).

Sport and social change in the UK

The election of the Labour administration in 1997 can be defined by a new ‘third way’ political discourse about social inclusion, which emphasized the cosy language of community, stakeholding and social cohesion. Sport has been promoted as a potential instrument in the pursuit of these diverse social policy agendas including enhancing health, engaging disaffected youth,

combating anti-social behaviour and helping to build stronger and safer communities (Coalter, 2007a; Collins and Kay, 2003). New Labour's approach and its subsequent funding initiatives stem from a report by Policy Action Group 10 (DCMS, 1999, p, 23) which stressed that, "sport can contribute to neighbourhood renewal by improving communities' performance on four key indicators – health, crime, employment and education." Notably sport and physical activity began to enter into a new found 'fame', in the development of public policy.

Sport and physical activity public policy

The promotion of sport and physical activity participation were largely addressed through the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). In 2002 the DCMS, in collaboration with the Social Exclusion Unit (SEL), produced *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives* (DCMS, 2002). In this regard, the *Game Plan* can be viewed as a landmark document as it outlined the government strategy and vision for both mass participation and performance sport. Essentially, it provided an action plan for the development of sport and addressed issues of social exclusion through the increased provision of mass participation opportunities and in turn physical activity. According to the *Game Plan* (DCMS, 2002) subsequent participation in physical activity become a public health priority. Previously, health policies tended to focus on education relating to food intake, alcohol and smoking cessation. During the past 15 years, sport and physical activity have featured consistently in government documents. Specifically, they highlight the positive benefit of sport and physical activity on non-communicable disease and the opportunities sport offers as a vehicle for health promotion.

Building on the philosophy of *Game Plan*, in 2004 the CMO's report entitled '*At Least Five a Week*' provided the UK's first authoritative public document solely outlining the evidence and impact of physical activity on health (DoH, 2004a). The CMO called for a shift in society's

attitude towards physical activity and highlighted that physical activity was essential for people to live healthy lives (DoH, 2004a).

The CMO's report was shortly followed by the *Choosing Health White Paper* (DoH, 2004b) and the related *Choosing Activity Action Plan* (DoH, 2005). These documents outlined the government's plan for supporting the public in making healthier choices. They also contained guidelines as to how services should be developed in order to increase physical activity levels across the UK. The DoH report, *Be Active. Be Healthy* (2009), an update of the *Choosing Activity Action Plan* and the more recent, *Start Active Stay Active* report (2011) further encouraged cross-government department working, with local government and importantly delivery organisations urged to place physical activity at the hub of a community. With the intention of providing recommendations for; a life course approach, stronger recognition of the role of vigorous intensity activity, the flexibility to combine moderate and vigorous intensity activity, an emphasis upon daily activity and new guidelines on sedentary behaviour. To do this, cross-sectional working was espoused as an approach to create frameworks to improve individual health (not just address ill health), increase business productivity and improve the environment. The adopted framework for the delivery of physical activity was based on local needs, with a particular emphasis on using the 2012 Olympic legacy as a driving force for mass participation. Sport and Physical Activity Alliances were developed across England to create partnerships that would enable cross government and industry delivery of physical activity initiatives, presenting new investment opportunities and delivery infrastructures (i.e., following the aim of increasing local power for physical activity delivery).

Since 2005, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has produced a number of documents aimed at providing guidance on health promotion, to reduce health inequalities and support a variety of methods to address physical inactivity, and related non-

communicable disease. Interventions to address physical inactivity tend to use educational, behavioural and social, and/or environmental and policy approaches (Kahn et al., 2002; Cavill and Bauman, 2004).

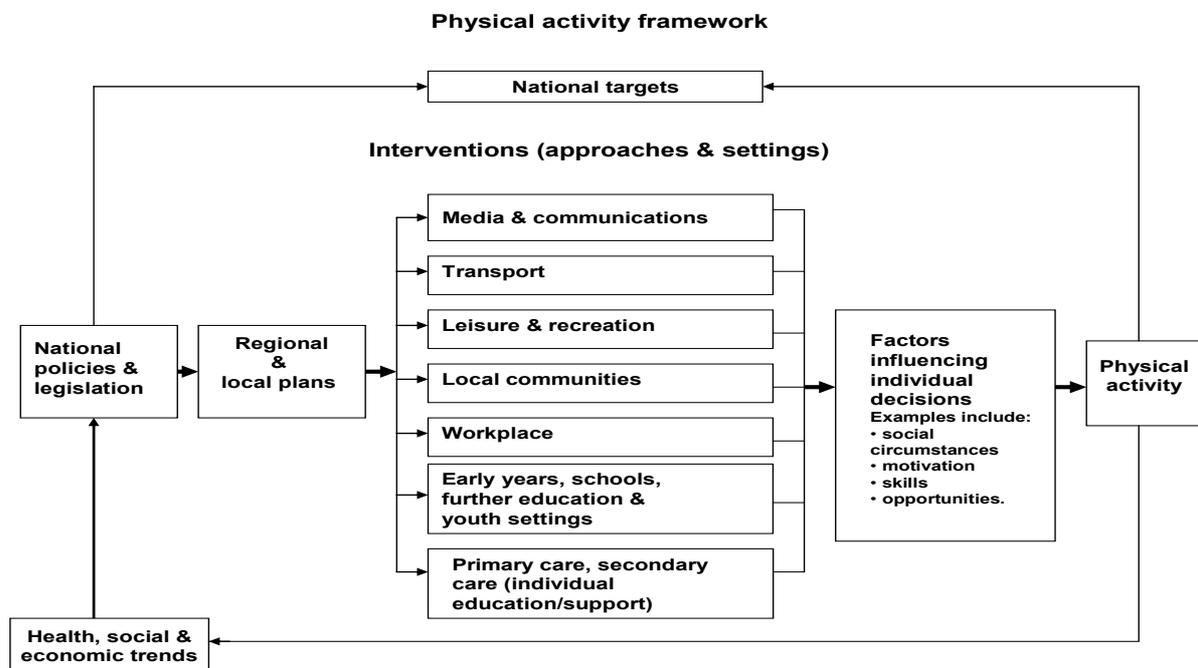


Figure 1.1 The links between national policy, local plans and the types of intervention that can increase levels of physical activity (NICE, 2008, p14).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the link between national policy and legislation, regional and local plans and the types of intervention that can increase levels of physical activity. The framework demonstrates the complexities of addressing inactivity and supports cross government agendas for multi-level strategies that combine both environmental and individual level interventions. The physical activity framework was used to develop NICE guidance and recommendations relating to a series of approaches and settings to encourage physical activity, including local community engagement. Within the NICE (2008) guidelines, it clearly aims to place physical activity at the heart of the community by targeting policy makers whom are seen as an integral part of implementing these recommendations. Considering contemporary public health guidance (NICE, 2004), which recommends that deliverers provide a range of mixed exercise programmes

of moderate intensity, sport has been championed as a vehicle for the delivery of such work throughout this framework (NICE, 2009)

Sport and health

Sport has had an inherent link with health benefits due to the direct causal links between physical activity (and exercise) and specific health benefits. Although there is wide consensus that physical activity can create positive health changes for non communicable diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, non-insulin dependent diabetes, colon cancer, osteoporosis and haemorrhagic stroke, such benefits to which sport can also contribute too (Coalter, 2005).

Physical activity brings benefits to children, contributing to healthy growth and development of the musculoskeletal and cardio respiratory systems, maintenance of energy balance and healthy weight and avoidance of risk factors such as hypertension and high cholesterol (2005). Sport alone cannot bring about these benefits: other key issues such as diet, lifestyle and poverty also have a major impact on health (especially in children). Furthermore, it is regular physical activity (at least 20 minutes three times a week for adults and double that figure for children and young people), rather than participation in sport per se, that contributes to these health benefits (Vigor et al., 2006).

There is evidence that current recommendations for physical activity are not coherent (i.e., recommendations vary across key organisations notable the Department of Health and Sport England). According to some researcher's recommendations of 60 minutes (some of which can be accumulated in short 10 minute (minimum) bouts of moderate to vigorous physical activity (NICE, 2009) provides no dose response relationship for health gains which the activity guidance can be obtained or to reduce cardiovascular risk cluster (Boreham and Riddoch, 2001; Anderson et al., 2006). Whilst researchers have discussed the importance of doing physical

activity, others have focused on promoting a reduction in sedentary behaviour. The argument exists that involvement in more traditional sports, such as football and netball, is unlikely to lead to 'enough' regular activity to achieve and sustain the associated health benefits and may even have a negative impact by substituting for a more general increase in active lifestyle which other activities (e.g., running, cycling) may provide (Coalter, 2000). Despite this, sport has been highlighted as a 'hook' for health messages and received widespread attention from the Designed to Move initiative from Nike (Designed to Move, 2012). Central to the initiative was that the first ten years of child's life is a legitimate window to creating a lifelong commitment to physical activity. This early childhood focus will be supported by a lifelong approach to physical activity and sport as an integral part of everyday life (Designed to Move, 2012). Similarly, The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) document (Physical Activity for Children: A statement of Guidelines for Children Ages 5-12 years, 2004) suggested that children should accumulate at least 60 minutes (and up to several hours) of physical activity on all, or most days of the week (Corbin and Pangrazi, 2004). Dissimilar to NICE (2009), this report suggests bouts of 15 minutes or longer of physical activity per day and avoid long periods of inactivity (i.e., more than two or more hours a days, during the day). NASPE (2002) also recommended that, in order to prevent boys (age 6-12years) becoming overweight or obese they need to achieve 15,000 steps per day with girls requiring 12,000 steps per day. Both the NASPE and Nike reports highlight the important role of physical activity and the role sport can play in the accumulation of physical activity.

Sport has transformed from being an activity for a few mainly local communities to a global phenomenon, which has attracted interest and attention from key leaders of governments (Houlihan, 1997). It has been claimed that sport can contribute to health through its ability to attract large crowds and offer a means or vehicle to communicate health messages. The Department of Health Football and Health pamphlet explain that it uses football as a hook to reach many people with messages about healthy eating options (DoH, 2005). UNICEF (2004)

stresses the importance of sport's power to gather large crowds to communicate messages on health risks, such as alcohol, drugs and smoking and to carry out specific campaigns relating to saving lives through providing a venue for immunising children and providing insecticide treatment for mosquito nets to protect families from malaria. Smith and Westerbeek (2007) also highlighted that sport is a unique vehicle to engage with communities to hear the messages and participate in activities. This was echoed by Crabbe et al., (2006) in findings that suggested that sport (through its popularity) not only hooks young people but can also engage them and provide a platform for further discourse on health. Whilst we will all agree that sport is effective in attracting a 'crowd' (and perhaps provides an entry point for health messages), it does not demonstrate that attendance at (and participation in) sport leads to behaviour change. Similarly, the provision of 'more sport' does not necessarily make the sport offer more appealing to children and young people who do not like sport.

Behaviour change

Behaviour change is complex and multi-factorial process. The transtheretical model (TTM) outlines the stages of change. The stage construct is important, in part, because it represents a temporal dimension. Previously, behaviour change often was construed as a discrete event, such as quitting smoking, drinking, or overeating. The TTM posits change as a process that unfolds over time, with progress through a series of six stages, although frequently not in a linear manner (DiClemente and Prochaska, 1982). TTM originated in smoking cessation research, over time, researchers have expanded, validated, applied, and challenged core constructs of the TTM (Hall and Rossi, 2008; Noar, Benac and Harris, 2007). Table 1.1 outlines the core constructs of behaviour change within the TTM.

Table 1.1. The core constructs of the Transtheoretical Model of behaviour change.

Construct	Description
<i>Stages of Change</i>	
Precontemplation	No intention to take action within the next 6 months
Contemplation	Intends to take action within the next 6 months
Preparation	Intends to take action within the next 30 days and has taken some behavioural steps in this direction
Action	Changed overt behaviour for less than 6 months
Maintenance	Changed overt behaviour for more than 6 months
Termination	No temptation to relapse and 100% confidence

Promoting behaviour change (i.e., increases in physical activity) is by no means a straight forward or an isolated event. It is a complex and multi-factorial process. The ecological model may add further context to the difficulty and complexity of factors that influence our behaviour and therefore the behaviour change process.

Spence and Lee (2003) highlight within the ecological model of physical activity is influenced by I) Intrapersonal (biological, psychological & behavioural), ii) Social (family support, modelling), and iii) Environmental (communities and facilities) (Sallis and Owen, 1999). These must be considered concurrently when addressing children’s activity. Whilst children have positive and valid perception of health and unhealthy behaviour, this may not necessarily translate into behavioural action. The most consistent correlate of physical activity for children and adolescents (aged between 3-12 years) was found to be; time spent outdoors, parental overweight status, intention to be active, physical activity preferences, perceived barriers (inverse), previous physical activity status, health diet and program/facility access (Sallis et al., 1999; Ferreira et al., 2006; Gustafson and Rhodes, 2006; Edwardson and Gorely, 2010). Given that such factors can all be controlled or (at least) influenced by the parent (Patrick and Nicklas, 2005; Sheperd et al., 2006), the family appears to be a key agent in children’s physical activity. Despite this, sport has appeared as a ‘front runner’ in approaches to tackle social issues.

The concept of sport attending to social ills has been introduced earlier within this chapter. The belief that sport can extend to spheres that are hard to reach (or engage) through more

traditional political activities has had important ramifications for the football industry, with central government increasingly keen for football clubs to play a role in tackling social issues (mainly social exclusion). Indeed, the promotion of football in a public policy context is rooted largely on the contribution it *could* make to reducing social exclusion across its local communities. Despite this enthusiasm to champion sport, no-one has really evaluated whether ‘behaviour change’ has occurred. In essence, sport has been championed as a resolution to social ills by proxy (i.e., it was positioned to do something that it was never really intended to do). Furthermore, sport does not appear to possess the skills (i.e., people skills) or culture to attend to such new (i.e., health and behaviour change) agenda. It appears that sport positioning has been through an association and political rhetoric rather than meaningful action, purpose, monitoring and/or evaluation.

The role of the football clubs in the local community

The relationship between football and its local community is not a new phenomenon. Historically football clubs in England developed to represent geographical locations often named after places (with the exception of Port Vale) including cities and towns (Bale, 2000). These were often focal points for community identity having emerged out of schools, churches or workplaces (and some cases cricket teams). Burnham (2004) stated that they were originally a source of civic pride, which Sugden (2002) has found still exist in this present era. The role of the football club continues to play a significant role in the development of local identity (Morrow, 2003). However, a number of studies have found the notion of ‘community’ around and within football clubs and stadia is complex (Bale, 2000; Perkins, 2000; Watson, 2000). Whether local economic cases of football clubs supporting the local community (Johnstone et al, 2000) or the ‘psychic income’ and subsequent benefits to the local workforce following success on the pitch detailed by Bale (2000), it can be argued that football clubs have a moral

responsibility to develop relationships within the local community and broader supporter community. One such development was the introduction of Football in the Community (FitC) programme.

The rise of the Football in the Community programme

Recently, the labelling of clubs as ‘community’ institutions has largely taken place under the banner of the national FitC programme. The latter has its antecedents in the late 1970s when the Sports Council encouraged football clubs to combat the spectre of hooliganism by establishing formal programmes with the intention of attracting supporters and improving fans’ behaviour. Notably the programme was launched principally in response to football’s problems (e.g., hooliganism) rather than those of its communities (Mellor, 2005).

The programmes had limited success (given limited expertise, resources and lack of research), receiving fresh impetus in the mid-1980s from the Professional Footballers’ Association who piloted six FitC programmes in the North-West of England. Their aim was to build bridges between football clubs and their local communities primarily through the provision of sporting opportunities and player appearances (Mellor, 2005; Reade, 2000). The FitC programmes were a means to encourage more people (in particularly children) to play (Mellor, 2008) and watch football developing closer links between clubs and their communities (Brown, Crabbe and Mellor, 2006). At this time, the vast majority of clubs were accused of paying little attention to their community programme. In essence, this (typically) resulted in a lack of strategy, planning, and/or support for and within FitC operations. Please note FitC programmes are also known as community trusts, community foundations, community sport trusts and community departments. For the purpose of the thesis FitC programme will be used, as the preferred terminology.

Football in the Community programmes: charitable trusts

Football clubs in England are incorporated, mostly as companies limited by shares operating within the Companies Act, and exist as commercial entities with an operational need to maximise income. Perversely they rarely make a profit with their owners seemingly focused on either investment to strengthen the team to challenge, or servicing debt payments (Morrow, 2003). Since its inception the combined Premier League clubs have never made a collective pre-profit in any one season – in 2006/07 the 20 clubs made a combined loss of £285 million (Morrow, 2003). During the same period, despite dramatic increases in revenue, nearly 50 out of 92 English Football Leagues' clubs have been in administration (Morrow, 2003). From this it could be concluded that football clubs are preoccupied by 'on the pitch' concerns, leaving community work a mere distraction. It appears that some football clubs use the 'when it suit's' type relationship approach to working with their community programme (i.e., when deployment of the community programme can benefit club objectives). Holt and Shailer (2003, p159) highlight the sometime hypocritical stance that football clubs have with respect to their community: confirmed the following aspect by saying that:

“The irony is, of course, that when clubs need support from local authorities on planning issues, they are not slow to stress the role of the football club as a community institution, a vital part of social and economic fabric of the town and region”

FitC programmes appear to need to be financially independent from the football club to (a) access lucrative philanthropic and corporate social funding afforded to charitable bodies and (b) avoid the ruthless, on-pitch performance focused decision making evident within football. Despite this, the FitC programme shares the brand, image and on-pitch success and failure of the football club, therefore a healthy collaborative supportive relationship is required.

The importance of FitC programmes independence and subsequent financial security is critical in aligning to social agendas (and subsequently receiving social funding). This was often through the community trust model (Walters, 2009). Jenkins and James (2012) found that only three FitC

programmes were kept within the “Football Club” (i.e., managed internally). The rest of the 20 Premier League clubs for the 2011/2012 season including the three newly promoted clubs, and the three clubs relegated at the end of the 2010/11 season adopted a community trust foundation model of community engagement (Jenkins and James, 2012). This is in line with a key recommendation of the report *Football and its Communities*; to improve levels of engagement between football clubs and communities was that Football in the Community programmes should convert to “outward facing” independent community organisations (Brown, Crabbe and Mellor, 2006).

A community trust should be constituted as a not-for-profit charitable organisation with structural and strategic independence from a football club, headed by its own board of trustees who are responsible for setting strategic direction. The trustees should also appoint a chief executive to implement strategy. A community trust should also be financially independent from a football club, meaning that it is the responsibility of the chief executive and the trustees to generate funding and determine spending (Jenkins and James, 2012). Despite the FitC programme being financially, structurally and strategically independent from the football club, the majority of programmes maintain association in name with the Football Club. Since the development of FitC programmes in the 1970’s sport and third sector have undergone significant change with commercialisation and the new found social role for football.

Commercialisation and partnerships in sport and physical activity

Commercialisation has impacted professional sport clubs in many ways, helping business becoming more effective and to increase revenue. The not-for-profit sector has not been unaffected by commercialisation. These organisations have undergone substantial culture and operational changes. This has included managers becoming more businesslike, affecting decision making and organisational strategies (Zimmerman, 1997; Robinson, 1999). Similarly, sport and

particularly football has received widespread acclaim to contribute positively to a multitude of societal outcomes. Unprecedented amounts of public and private money in recent times (1997-2006) have been targeted at FitC programmes (Coalter, 2007). In this regard, the initial focus of FitC programmes has evolved from build bridges between football clubs and their local communities primarily through the provision of sporting opportunities and player appearances (Mellor, 2001; Reade, 2000) to working across a wide variety of complex social agendas such as health and education. This has contributed to the substantial growth in the work undertaken within football clubs on social agendas.

The commercial sector has been championed by successive governments in the development of sport (and physical activity) strategies. From the *Game Plan* (DCMS, 2002) through to the present government's Big Society aspirations (The Big Society Network, 2013), we have seen both participation and performance targets which emphasised the inclusion of partnerships of public, voluntary and private organisations. Such examples include free swim initiatives, GP exercise referral programmes, the Building Schools for the Future initiatives. Whether through the development of facilities or sponsorship or provision of services and/or facilities these partnerships exist to help harness added value to shared goals (as highlighted in *Designed to Move* and Nike, 2012). Change4Life (2009) is a nationwide movement to help people change their lifestyles within the United Kingdom. Change4Life joined with strategic partners to help deliver health and lifestyle related messages. Major brands such as Aviva, Nickledeon, Nintendo Wii, Sky and Halfords all played a role in delivering on shared objectives. It appears that shared objectives and partnerships have contributed to shared practice and the rise in managerialism within the third sector (Roberts, Paul Jones III and Fröhling, 2005). Football clubs and FitC programmes have been ideal grounds for such partnerships to flourish. More recently, FitC programmes have been identified as organisations that can attend to the development of a range of social issues (Watson, 2000).

Football can solve our problems!

Within the UK, government-backed national programs of education through football (such as ‘Playing for Success’) have reinvigorated aspects of the civic functions of stadium spaces, utilised as sites for learning, healthcare, social enterprise and neighbourhood renewal. This widespread belief that football can be used to promote social change extends across government departments and key football bodies (DoH, 2005; Collin and Kay, 2003; Football Task Force, 1999; DCMS, 2002). This is encapsulated by Perkins’ (2000, p113) observation that “what football ... can be *used for* almost has no bounds these days given the huge public interest in the sport.” Thus, football appears to provide an attractive terrain for delivering the government’s wider social outcomes due to its widespread popularity both at the elite level and across the mass population. Despite the public interest in ‘watching football’ there was no evidence to support the aspiration that football does work in tackling social issues (Coalter, 2007). Despite this, football and the power of football has been heralded, as a means to creating positive health changes and delivering crucial health messages to both the most ‘at risk’ and marginalised people across their local community, the United Kingdom and the World (FIFA, 2008; DoH, 2005).

Football and health

In 2005, and following on from the ‘Choosing Health’ White Paper (DoH, 2004), the ‘Football for Health’ manifesto was released highlighting the importance of building partnerships between local health institutions and football organisations in the United Kingdom to promote health and activity (DoH, 2005). The Public Health Minister Caroline Flint of the time stated:

“Football is an important part of many people’s lives and with its family friendly policies including smoke free grounds, family enclosures and football in the community work carried out by club players it provides great opportunities to get across key messages about living healthy, active lives.”

(Kick Start to Health, 2005, p.1)

The 'Football for Health' Department of Health manifesto highlighted a number of case studies that attempt to show football has a proven track record with regards to delivering successful education, social inclusion and community projects in partnership with the government. These include the Positive Futures, Premier League Health and the Princes Trust Football Initiative. Moreover, the emphasis on the potential impact *football* can have is clearly highlighted in FIFAs work on 'Football for Health' (FIFA, 2008).

Despite widespread support of the role of sport and football in tackling health issues, the empirical evidence for such benefits is limited. Sport England in recent years has stressed the need for greater evidence, insight and understanding, emphasising the need to understand what does and doesn't work to inform wiser investment in the future (Sport England, 2012). At the same time there is a burgeoning literature examining the potential social impact of sport, which repeatedly argues that the cumulative evidence base for many claims for sport is relatively weak (Coalter, 2007a, 2007b; Collins and Kay, 2003; Long and Sanderson, 2001; Crow and Nichols, 2004). Whilst many within sport have welcomed the recent new opportunities (and the subsequent funding), these opportunities have been accompanied by more evidence-based policy making. This has revealed many weaknesses that question the logic and reality of such an approach. Typically, such interventions and approaches appear to be deficient of *real* evidence and/or evaluation of the intricacies of successful practice to inform the content of these policies (Coalter, 2007a). Furthermore, Jackson et al., (2005) located no rigorous studies that tested the effectiveness of policy interventions that had been organised through sporting organisations with a view to increase healthy behaviours (Jackson et al., 2005). To this time, the claims of sport and footballs 'power' to engage rested solely on politicians, policy makers and practitioners rather than on an evidence base.

Numerous authors argue there is a lack of robust evidence of the direct impact of sport and physical activity, calling for more rigorous and sustained testing (Collins and Kay, 2003; Tacon, 2007; Coalter, 2007a; Coalter, 2007b; Spaaij, 2009a; 2009b). More broadly, Coalter (2008, p48)

contends that “sport in any simple sense rarely achieves the variety of desired outcomes attributed to it” going on to state that “issues of process and context ... are key to understanding its developmental potential.” Coalter is a keen critic of the uninformed policy approaches of the Labour government during their return to power in 1997, which appear to have created an environment for such claims to grow substantially. Coalter et al., (2000) observed that, even where records exist, they are usually related to outputs (numbers of learners, for example), not outcomes (the impact that the programmes had on the participants). Nevertheless, many FitC programmes had grown into ‘... mature and sophisticated organisations developing sport from grass roots to excellence, tackling serious social issues and working in partnership with both the private and public sectors’ (Watson, 2000, p114) due to funding to support them tackling social issues. More recently, a number of authors have been able to offer valuable evidence surrounding the role of football in health improvement.

It has been highlighted that men’s uptake of traditional health service is an area of concern for health professionals (Pringle et al., 2011) resulting in practitioners considering novel and innovative ways to engage participants (particularly men) with health issues (Wilkin and Baker, 2003). Wilkin and Baker (2003) highlighted that places of familiarity for men are more likely to allow them to feel comfortable; one such place that fits this finding is sport, sport events and sports stadia. Research concerning health improvement in sport stadia such as bringing health and wellbeing professionals into the stadia has been undertaken in Rugby League (Witty and White, 2010). The club involved ran a successful weight loss group for men, where retention levels and weight loss were higher than in standard programmes (Whitty and White, 2010). One other finding was that the participants reported only joined because of the connection within the club. These findings offer some positive evidence that sport can offer a vehicle to promote health improvement.

A number of researchers have highlighted and recommended the use of leisure, sport and professional sport context to connect with people on a health improvement agenda (White et al., 2011; Campbell, 2011; Whitty and White, 2011). It appears that those within positions of influence have responded to this through the delivery of a range of health interventions. The Tackling Men's Health Project used Rugby League matches to provide health advice and lifestyle checks (alongside follow-up activities) for men (Whitty and White, 2011). At international cricket matches, the Boundaries for Life Project delivered medical checks for male spectators (Trivedy, 2012). This approach to health improvement has also been incorporated in US sport, notable the US NASCAR (motor racing) series (Campbell, 2011). Whilst the novel approach to health improvement is positive there remains little evidence on the long term impact of these interventions (White et al., 2011; Pringle et al., 2012). With the English Premier League reportedly attracting attendances in the region of over 11million people, alongside a projected 4.7 billion people watching on television and internet globally, there is no surprise football has been positioned to attend to the health improvement agenda (FA, 2010; Harris, 2011).

In football a number of community health improvement interventions have begun to gather evidence of success. Using football stadia to provide mental health promotion and mental health awareness training has helped men address issues such as depression, self-esteem and inclusion (Pringle and Sayers, 2004). Gray et al., (2011) in their pilot research controlled trial Fit Fans in Training across Scottish Premier League football clubs delivered a successful 12 week physical activity, weight loss and healthy living interventions. Premier League Health was a similar health improvement programme delivered across English Premier League football clubs. Activities included health checks and awareness raising activities alongside regular weekly exercise classes designed to promote health and wellbeing (White et al., 2012). Success in engagement of men in health related behaviours and awareness raising were recorded alongside the use of the football clubs a place men feel comfortable to deliver health messages (Pringle et al., 2011; White et al., 2012; Pringle et al., 2013). Other findings included positive health changes, increases in physical

activity levels, improved weight status and a reduction in alcohol consumption (White et al., 2012). This research coupled with a recent study in the Lancet, which evidences successful weight loss in men via the Fit Fans in Training programme delivered across Scottish Premier League Clubs (Hunt et al., 2014) offers further support for the potential impact football based health improvement can have. Given these results and that as the most popular sport worldwide, football has the potential to capture almost an entire population it is important to consider footballs role in health improvement.

Football interventions have been ‘enthusiastically’ funded in recent years, current monitoring and evaluation processes (generally) do not fairly reflect the true nature and complexity of the interventions, especially when children are involved (Brown, Crabbe and Mellor, 2006; Van Sluijs et al., 2007). In England, football clubs, or more specifically FitC programmes, have been at the forefront of delivering interventions for such policy agendas (DoH, 2005). Despite, football related health projects being heralded as successful partnerships the ‘real’ effect of such partnership and their projects appear difficult to gauge (i.e. successful processes and tangible outcomes appear limited and vague due to the lack of rigorous monitoring and evaluation) (especially where children are involved). More work is, therefore, needed to construct more flexible ways of judging these football-oriented interventions so that useful feedback can be provided to enhance and develop future policy and strategies. Furthermore, national guidance recommends that behavioural interventions are evaluated (NICE, 2007), in order that constituents learn about the effects of football orientated interventions. In this regard, football oriented interventions have not had coherent procedures in place to adequately evidence any ‘real’ (i.e. observed, articulated, measured and evaluated) effectiveness. It appears incumbent to consider the monitoring and evaluation processes that can help understand and evaluate the effectiveness of a community engagement intervention in promoting ‘real’ change (i.e. physical activity, behavioural, lifestyle or societal).

At this point, as the author has completed the insight into football and health. It appears pertinent to consider the writing of Green (2008, p.131) who notes that “it is not sport per se that is responsible for particular outcomes; it is the ways that sport is implemented.” Sport appears a key factor in recruitment, but after that very little is known about its importance for promoting behaviour change. It is not sufficient to assume that a program alone will achieve an assumed outcome or behaviour change without some careful planning, especially working with children. In turn, the focus shifts to cast a critical gaze on the interaction between the participant and the project, as well as needing to understand not only what influence the sports-based intervention has, but *why* it had that effect. In this regard, understanding the role of the importance of the role of the coach within delivery of interventions within FitC programmes appears critical. In this way, researchers and will be able to use these insights to inform the design and delivery of future projects and their evaluation.

The role of the community coach

Football clubs themselves are traditionally closed environments and have been referred to a ruthless concerning the performance side of the game (Parker, 2001). When considering football clubs one naturally links to the football player or coach/practitioner. The coach is an important figure in the development of ‘the player’ and has been championed as playing a significant role in shaping the character and identity (e.g., values, beliefs, attitude) of each individual (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004; Wylleman, Alfermann, and Lavallee, 2004). In sport and physical activity the coach-child relationship is deemed to be particularly crucial and essential foundations to any coaching (Jowett, 2005; Dwyer, et al., 2006). As in sport performance literature, the coach participant relationship is important within health promotion. With research suggesting that FitC programmes are both growing, in many cases overstretched and not keeping the pace with regards to new project developments and staff development (i.e., the emergence of

skills shortages) (McGuire and Fenoglio, 2004; McGuire and Fenoglio, 2008), serious consideration must be given to exploring the role and support provided for the community coaches working within FitC programmes. Moreover, there are ethics considerations surrounding the distribution of public funding those ill-equipped to deliver on social issues.

It is worth positioning this debate in the current political and economic context to further highlight the difficulties faced by those working in FitC programmes. The times of unprecedented public and private funding (which has propped up and nourished the rapid development of FitC programmes) are long gone. England is in an age of public spending austerity, thus both reduced levels of funding and increased levels of scrutiny on the (social) impact of investments are likely to intensify (Hindley and Williamson, 2013).

FitC programmes need to align to a position whereby they can support their claims of social welfare success with evidence. This strategic urgency sheds further concern on the skill base of those operating with FitC programmes. As McGuire and Fenoglio (2004) note, those working with FitC programmes often have little or no training in research and evaluation. As Coalter (2001, p1) points out in order “to address the current information deficit will require the development of a culture in which output and outcome definition, monitoring and evaluation are regarded as central components of planning, management and service delivery.” It appears that FitC programmes are struggling to develop strategically and operationally from the days of a ‘coach and bag of footballs’ to meet the needs of their expanding portfolio of activities tackling various social issues. Thus, suggesting a need to challenge current cultural practice of coaches and practitioners, existing approaches and engage in positive organisational change to enhance and capitalise on the potential social impact of their work. It is evident that further research and more importantly capacity building and developmental support is needed for coaching staff within FitC programmes.

Chapter Two

2.1. Introduction to the thesis methodological framework

The following sections seeks to provide the reader within an insight into the methodological framework from which the thesis is positioned, the research context and thesis aims.

Creating meaningful change through Action Research

Action research is associated with addressing practical problems in the workplace (Gilbourne 1999, 2001; Pasmore, 2001; Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004). Kurt Lewin's work in particular offered a direct challenge to the traditional perspective of the social scientist as "the disinterested 'objective' observer...for Lewin practical and theoretical problems were to be investigated together as if they were one. Action research was to be seen as a group process which always involved collaboration between the researcher and researched." (Finning, 1992, p190). John Collier, who's work targeted behaviour change in the workplace stated that, "...engaging participants in dialogues without research would reveal differences in opinion but provide no means for the resolution of those differences...only a participative approach to research could create the conditions under which authentic improvements in race relations would occur." (Pasmore, 2001, p39).

Action research has been described as a form of self-reflexive inquiry (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). In this regard, participants in social situations engage in self-reflection in order to improve and/or rationalise their own practice. Action research is participatory and democratic in nature and focuses on the development of practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile (human) purposes (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). In its basic form action research concerns a continuous cyclical process, including reconnaissance, planning, observation and reflection (Elliot, 1991). The cyclical process seeks to encourage practitioners to reflect upon new working strategies (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004), with the intention of stimulate thinking towards an action or change strategy, which is reflective in nature (McFee, 1993). The reflection on

current practice can act to encourage debate among practitioners and facilitates ideas relating to practice, which can be shared (Gilbourne, 2001). As the process of action research opens and the reflective cycles begin, positive changes in working practice become more likely.

Action research requires longitudinal engagement whereby the researcher acts as the facilitator in the participants' change strategy. Therefore, this relationship between the researcher and participant is consistent with both constructivism and critical theory. In this regard, the researcher and researched are inextricably linked. Tinning (1992) highlighted that change generally includes a "...cycle of phases or moments which include *planning, acting, monitoring, and reflecting.*" Greenwood and Levin (2000, p94) stated that such social inquiry (i.e., that aims to generate knowledge and action for social change) is the biggest *test* for social research.

The relationship between the researcher and researched evokes the notion of *participation and collaboration*. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) outlined the evolution of 'participatory action research'. Specifically, they identified seven types of action research: participatory research, critical action research, classroom action research, action learning, action sciences, soft systems approaches and industrial action research. Kemmis (2001; p91-92) highlighted "...*empirical-analytical* (or positivist), *hermeneutic* (or interpretive) and *critical* approaches in research theory and practice". In the former, empirical-analytic form, typically there is a focus on the technical aspect (i.e., getting things done). Within the workplace, this can concern increasing positive aspects of working practice or reducing negative working practice (i.e., inappropriate behaviour) (Kemmis, 2001). The process generally aligns more with positivist paradigm in that it is relatively narrow and pragmatic (Kemmis, 2001).

An *interpretive* action research approach includes technical aspirations, however it embraces a more practical emphasis. In this regard, the approach facilitates 'wise and prudent practical decision-making' by practitioners. This approach, also termed, practical action research is self directed by an individual or group of practitioners. In a bid to enhance existing practice or

develop new working practices. The focus is not only on improved practitioner performance, but they are encouraged to also:

“...see how their goals, and the categories in which they evaluate their work, are shaped by their ways of seeing and understanding themselves in context. The process of action research is a process of self-education for the practitioner – through one which may also produce commentaries and reports aimed at helping others see things more clearly...unlike technical action research, however practical action researcher aim just as much at understanding and changing themselves as subjects of a practice (as practitioners) as changing the outcomes of their practices.”

(Kemmis, 2001; p92)

The role of the researcher or facilitator should be to discuss new ideas, understand the rationale behind practice and decision making and to support and engage in the process of self-reflection (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Such an approach aligns closely with emancipatory action research, a term described by Kemmis (2001) that not only aimed for improved outcomes, but enables practitioners to arrive at a critique of their own working environment. Essentially, the process of emancipatory action research intervenes “...in the cultural, social and historical processes of everyday life to reconstruct not only the practitioner but also the practice setting (or, one might say, the work, the worker and the workplace)” (Kemmis, 2001, p92). Such a radical ambition for research has raised concerns relating to the precise nature of engagement in action research.

Kemmis (2001, p93) described his (and his colleagues) dilemma

“...that we should no longer set out to persuade others that they should undertake action research projects as a form of participatory, collaborative, critical investigation aimed at critical reconstruction of the work, the worker and the workplace. We feared that our advocacy for critical action research had become a ‘solution’ looking for ‘problems’ – that we had an answer to questions that people were not necessarily asking themselves. Instead we thought we should be working with people already committed to addressing felt dissatisfactions and overcoming injustices in the settings in which they found themselves...we could more readily develop the critical approach in contexts where people were already committed to taking action because they had begun to form a critical view about the nature of the consequence of the practices in which they were engaged.”

Action research concerns a practice which incorporates an understanding and recognition of the existence of craft knowledge (McFee, 1993) and should be an inclusive (i.e., the researcher and participants), and evolving process whereby practical knowledge can be identified and used to

develop practical actions to enhance working practice (McFee, 1993; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

FitC programmes are in a favourable position whereby both policy for sport and public health support their role as key agents in delivering activities and interventions to tackle social issues. Action research by nature aims to create behaviour change whether in humans, environments or organisations. More so, it offers a meaningful approach to work with FitC programmes to understand ‘what’s going on’, evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions and work with existing practitioners and community coaches to develop actions to create change, enhance working practice and in turn, the effectiveness of interventions.

Framing the research questions

The previous literature clearly shows the united belief that sport, and in particularly football, is a potentially powerful vehicle that can offer governments, health organisations and football organisations an opportunity to effect, enhance and do social good. It is clear that sport and football are being positioned by policy makers to deliver on issues of public health. The approach to sport policy has emerged without a real evidence base to support this policy making. However, given the widespread appeal of football and the existence of formal structures to deliver on the health agenda – FitC programmes are appearing as key players in public health delivery. It appears essential that effective evaluation of football oriented interventions take place in order to better understand where ‘real’ positive behavioural change can occur.

FitC programmes have not had coherent procedures in place to adequately evidence any ‘real’ (i.e. observed, articulated, measured and evaluated) effectiveness. It also appears pertinent to explore the ‘reality’ of working practices within FitC programmes at the forefront of the delivery of such interventions. To subsequently inform physical activity and health related policy decision-makers; and the day-to-day practice of aligned practitioners/coaches working within

public health, leisure or development units. As little or no monitoring or evaluation currently takes place and where it does, it is often unable to capture the true complexity involved in such behaviour change interventions, especially where children and young people are involved (Watson , 2000; Brown et al., 2006), it appears pertinent and important to examine this.

This thesis builds on and contributes to work in physical activity and health by exploring the effectiveness of a school based football oriented coaching intervention delivered by a FitC programme. In order to best address the research question and to enable the research process to directly benefit the participating sport body, action research was used as the research method. This highly collaborative approach to research (where the research “subjects” become research “partners”) is designed to create change and to provide rich empirical data from which new and improved methods of working practice are promoted to improve effectiveness. The use of Action Research in this setting is rare, but has the potential to facilitate a deep level of understanding found to be missing in research to date (Parker, 1998, Watson, 2000; Leblanc, 2004). The research took place in the city of Liverpool, which is situated in the north west of England. Local information specific to the Liverpool population are detailed as part of the reconnaissance phase.

The thesis centres on a formal collaboration between the community arm of Everton Football Club (Everton in the Community), the Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences at Liverpool John Moores University and Greggs plc. This collaborative action research study attempts to better understand the effectiveness of a FitC programme in promoting positive behaviour and/or lifestyle change. In this regard, no research has looked at the synergy between the strategic and operational practices and subsequent evaluation of a FitC programme intervention.

2.2. Introduction to the research context

Everton Football Club

Everton Football Club (EFC) has an illustrious history spanning back as far as 1878. Indeed, the club was one of 12 featured in Peter Lupson's acclaimed book: *'Thank God for FOOTBALL'* (2006). Lupson's work tracks the origins of 12 Premier League clubs who owe their existence to church and religion and therefore pays homage to EFC. Similarly, Bale (2000) also portrayed clubs as 'community' institutions playing key roles in their local communities, helping to reinforce a sense of place and local identity and by extension the local community.

Everton were founded in November 1878 when the St. Domingo's Church held a meeting at the Queen's Head Hotel, Village Street. They already had a cricket team but wanted to find another sport for the winter months. Moving forward, the newly established St. Domingo team played in Stanley Park and won their first game, against St Peter's Church. The following year the club were renamed Everton Football Club after the surrounding area. Since then the club have accumulated the highest number of years in the top flight (highest division) of English football, experiencing their most successful period during the mid-1980s. The club flirted with relegation in the mid 1990s before seeing more recent (relative) success with a number of appearances in European competitions and regular finishes in the top half of the Premier League table under manager at the time David Moyes.

Moyes joined Everton on 14 March 2002 and at his unveiling press conference, he acknowledged Everton as a club with a long standing community attachment. He said:

"I am joining the people's football club in Liverpool. The people in the street support Everton."

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-JwkqKbTOo>)

From then on both the club and fans alike have taken the banner 'The People's Club on Merseyside' forward with pride. At this point the club already had a community programme

in place. EitC became an independent registered charity in 2004. This suggests that EitC was a part of the more organised FitC programmes and aligned with the recommendations of both Watson (2000) and Brown et al., (2006).

The initial focus of EitC was in the facilitation of public player appearances to support local causes and to provide sporting opportunities in hard to reach, deprived and marginalized communities. Such communities come in abundance across Liverpool, a city of historic deprivation with ensuing riots in the 1980s, and more recently retaining the title of most deprived local authority within England in 2004, 2007 and 2010 (see Liverpool City Council, 2010). The relatively simple engagement and participation agenda renowned within traditional football development activities (and the roots of FitC programmes) (Mellor, 2008) was a major part of the core work of EitC up until 2004. EitC quickly moved forward from the initial *loose* remit of the national FitC programme programme and school based development activities to embrace other social agendas including, disability awareness and empowerment, social inclusion, and women and girls development. At the time EitC was a highly regarded FitC programme having been the first English Premier League football club to be awarded the prestigious ‘Community Mark’ national standard from Business in the Community (patron HRH Prince of Wales). Their vision was:

“To motivate, educate and inspire by harnessing the power of football and sport, improving the quality of the lives of all within our community, locally and regionally.”
(Everton, 2008, p1)

It was during this time that EitC began to develop the collaborative partnership with the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences at LJMU, with the consensus to develop an understanding of the ‘real’ impact of EitC through monitoring and evaluation. It was Taylor (2004) that highlighted the danger of committing to highly favourable outcomes and the risks of someone actually holding them to their commitments. In this regard, EitC were (at the time) claiming to improve quality of life. However, there was no evidence to support such a claim and no prior intention (understanding or ability) to begin to measure whether such a claim was valid. EitC recognised

that they could be doing more and that developing a collaborative partnership to conduct monitoring and evaluation could help them improve their effectiveness.

By 2005/06 EitC were beginning to enter into more complex agendas including those concerning behaviour change, health promotion and quality of life echoing the conclusions of Watson (2000). As a result, EitC had developed into a larger and more strategic organisation (an example of the organisational structure with EitC can be found in Appendix A). However, the model generally includes a CEO and General Manager (i.e., the senior management team) and a number of team leaders for specific areas of business (i.e., health and wellbeing, social inclusion and disability). Given the major deprivation and health concerns in Liverpool (Liverpool City Council, 2010) it was important for a FitC programme (and any programme) that was being funded to tackle such health issues to begin to monitor and evaluate their impact. It is important to note that this occurred at a time, where there was no requirement by funders for EitC to consider measuring the 'real' impact of their work. The collaborative arrangement, and thus the seeds of this thesis, began in July 2006.

Thesis aim

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the effectiveness of a FitC programme (Everton in the Community - EitC) in promoting health in its local community. In order to support future sport and football based health interventions delivered within FitC and inform broader sport based health improvement policy. This collaborative action research project will offer an in-depth insight into the working practice of a FitC programme and develop collaborative action (or ways forward) to enhance the organisations effectiveness delivering health improvement services through football.

- Aim 1: Reconnaissance Phase: Explore the effectiveness of a football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the broader working practice within EitC.
- Aim 2: Action Planning: In collaboration with senior management with EitC reflect on the effectiveness of the results from the reconnaissance phase with a view to creating meaningful and positive actions (or ways forward) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.
- Aim 3: Implementation and Monitoring Phase: Facilitate senior management in managing positive change within and across the organisation.

Thesis Objectives

The above aims will be achieved through the following objectives:

Objective 1: Reconnaissance Phase:

- I. Conduct a multi-method intervention evaluation of EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.
- II. Explore working practice and factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.

Objective 2: Action Planning:

- III. To develop a dissemination event for senior management within EitC to feedback findings from the reconnaissance phase and generate meaningful ways forward (or actions) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.
- IV. To collate and distribute potential actions before hosting an action meeting to discuss and confirm plausible ways forward.

Objective 3: Implementation and Monitoring Phase:

- V. To facilitate senior management in moving forward in order to improve working practice and enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.

Thesis Structure

In chapter 1 considers the policy developments relating to sport, physical activity and football as a vehicle for health promotion and the research approach. The contents of chapters 3 to 6 represents each phase of research relating to each of the thesis objectives.

Chapter 2 presents the methodological framework adopted and the research context for the thesis.

Chapter 3 presents the reconnaissance phase which concerns a multi-method intervention evaluation of EitC evaluation of EitCs football oriented school based community coaching intervention. Explore working practice and factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.

Chapter 4 concerns the development a dissemination event (i.e., focus group) for senior management within EitC to feedback findings from the reconnaissance phase and generate meaningful ways forward (or actions) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation. These potential ways forwards or actions are collated and distributed between senior management before an *action* meeting to discuss and confirm plausible ways forward

Chapter 5 involves an ethnographic study which incorporates a range of observational and informal data collection techniques, as the author facilitates senior management in moving forward in order to improve working practice and enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.

Chapter 6 outlines the main findings from all phases of research and includes a discussion on emerging issues. A comparison with existing literature and consideration of the implications of the findings are considered.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by offering the author reflective journey to the reader on *Becoming an action researcher*.

Chapter Three

STUDY 1: Reconnaissance Phase

Chapter 3 Study 1 Aims:

Aim 1: Reconnaissance Phase: Explore the effectiveness of a football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the broader working practice within EitC.

Objective 1:

- I. Conduct a multi-method intervention evaluation of EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.
- II. Explore working practice and factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.

3.1. Study 1: Aims and methodology: the reconnaissance phase

The following aims will be considered within Chapter 2:

- Reconnaissance Phase: Explore the effectiveness of a football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the broader working practice within EitC.

3.2 Location of the research

The context surrounding the thesis in terms of organisation and location has been discussed and highlighted within Chapter 1. Everton in the Community (EitC), the charitable arm of Everton Football Club is based within the City of Liverpool. At this juncture, it appears important to outline and discuss the demographic, health inequalities, levels of deprivation, and physical activity levels of residents with Liverpool to help set the scene for the thesis.

Health inequalities in the City of Liverpool

The City of Liverpool is situated in the North West of England in the Merseyside region. At the time of this research the North West of England has the highest percentage of super output areas (SOAs) (i.e., a standardised name for an area ranked according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) within the most deprived 10% in the country. Over 20% of all the SOAs in England fall within this region. Of the 911 SOAs that fall within the North West's most deprived 10%, 162 are located in Liverpool, equating to almost 18% overall (Liverpool City Council, 2007).

Liverpool is the eighth largest city in the United Kingdom, with a population of 434,900 (Liverpool City Council, 2007). It is apparent that Liverpool is one of the most socially deprived areas within England; with substantial health inequalities in comparison to the rest of the nation.

More than half of Liverpool residents reside in the 10% most deprived areas in England (Noble et al., 2008). The City of Liverpool is the most deprived local authority in England, ranked 3rd for income and 2nd for employment deprivation (out of the 354). Figure 2.1 provides an insight of the health inequalities in comparison to regional and national indicators of deprivation.

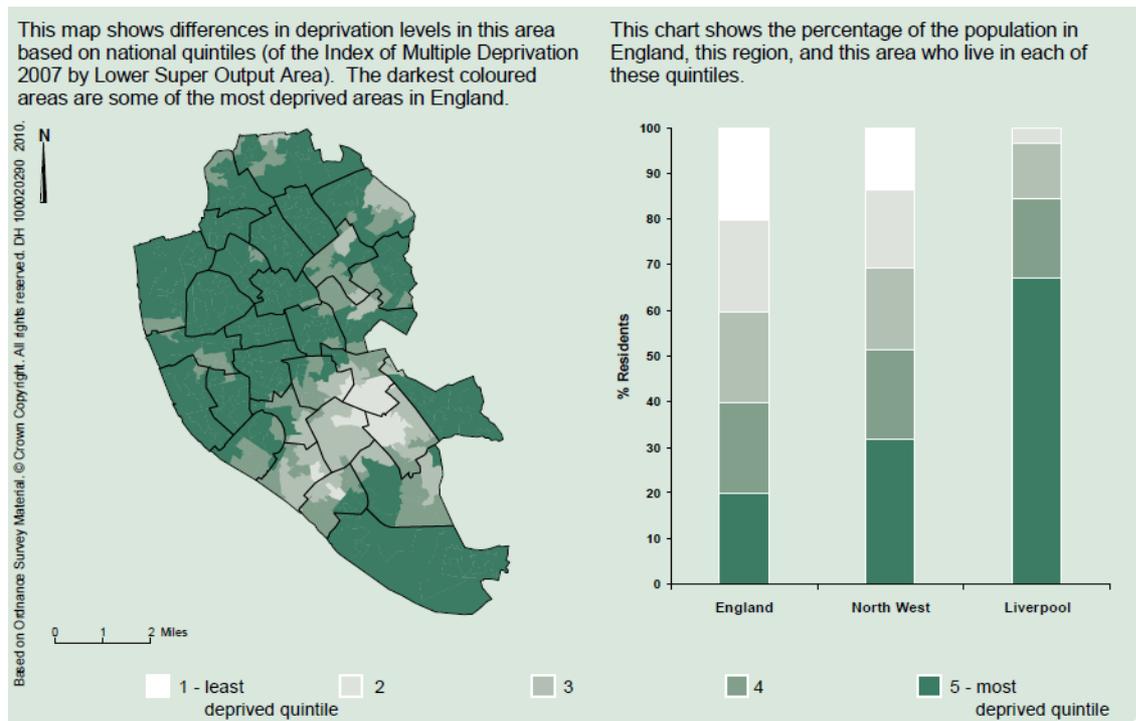


Figure 3.1 Deprivation of Liverpool residents by ward in comparison to the England and North West average (Source: APHO & Department of Health. © Crown Copyright 2010).

In a recent report, Liverpool Ward Profile Series it detailed that almost one-quarter of Liverpool residents reported a limiting long term illness, with 13% of residents claiming incapacity benefit (Liverpool City Council, 2007). Furthermore, life expectancy rates for Liverpool residents are approximately 3 years below the national average for both men and women and recorded mortality rates are significantly higher than the average mortality rate in England (Liverpool Public Health Intelligence Team, 2009). This includes significantly higher rates for most types of cancer, coronary heart disease and the prevalence of stroke. Such evident deprivation and health inequalities has meant that the City of Liverpool has been targeted by public policy in an attempt to reduce health inequalities. As Liverpool has notable health inequalities and low levels of

physical activity participation in comparison to the national average and has two major football clubs that are both community rooted and entrenched with history, it is an ideal location for the investigation of the role football clubs can play in health improvement.

Physical activity in the City of Liverpool

According to the latest Active People Survey the national average for participation in 30 minutes of physical activity on at least 3 days per week is 21.3% (Sport England, 2009), in comparison, to only 19.4% of residents in Liverpool. Moreover, a report by Sportlinx (2006) highlighted that between 1998-2006 both boys and girls in year 7 (aged 10-11 years) had experienced declines in agility, muscular endurance, speed and body mass index (BMI). As physical activity is considered important in the maintenance of health, the low self-reported levels and child data provides evidence to suggest that participation needs to be addressed (Cochrane et al., 2009). This thesis is predominantly set in 'deprived areas' of Liverpool. The apparent health deprivation present in Liverpool and the children of Liverpool highlight the need for more effective interventions that attend specifically to the health agenda and an investigation into current interventions currently being funded to deliver health related outcomes.

3.3 The process of biographical positioning

To produce a more defensible interpretation of the fieldwork, Foley (2002) espoused that there is a requirement for the author to explore the self and the other relationship. 'I', the author did not approach this research and field setting from an objective position. I brought personal history, experience with EitC, conceptual dispositions and epistemological perspectives (Krane and Baird, 2005). Foley (2002) stated that self-critical awareness allowed the researcher to realise their limitations as an 'interpreter' and deflate fantasies regarding truth and objectivity. Engaging in critical self-reflexivity can help position the author with respect to what they know and how they

know it (Sparkes, 1994). The difficulty lies in being able to identify which part of the author's biography were relevant, and how this can be written without engaging in self-absorption or providing narcissistic undertones (Sparkes, 1998). Tierney (2002) suggested that those who subscribe to postmodernism suggest that the author, "...ought not to be omniscient as if he or she is merely a recording instrument presenting neutral data." (p388). Tierney explained that the 'researcher-cum-author' should be actively engaged in the text and that any notions of objectivity or neutrality were misguided. It is hoped that self-reflective writing will help better position the reader to judge and interpret the research (Foley, 2002).

At this point, it appears evident that in the context of the present study, I should make my own value position clear. This position should include the 'so-called' facts and ideological assumptions that are attached to such a position (Denzin, 2002). Therefore, it is appropriate to offer the reader some biographical context appropriate to the research process and subsequent interactions with the participants.

During the interview process in May 2006, I was first introduced to senior management at EitC along with the research/supervisory team Dr Barry Drust, Professor Gareth Stratton and Dr Dave Richardson. I was successful within the interview process and further interaction within senior management evolved from June 2006 towards the development and commencement of the reconnaissance phase (August 2006). During this reconnaissance phase (August 2006–July 2007) I engaged in longitudinal ethnographic research (amongst other data collection techniques) and often engaged with senior management and EitC coaches in formal and informal interactions (Study 1). Subsequently, EitC senior management engaged in a further process of identifying appropriate action or change strategy (Study 2 Part I and Part II) between July–October 2007. The subsequent interactions between me and EitC senior management (and EitC coaches) continued for a further 3 years between 2007 and November 2009. During this time, the author was immersed within EitC as a practitioner-cum-researcher typically 5 days per week.

Throughout this period, both EitC senior management and EitC coaches became aware of our mutual interest in football, Everton Football Club, our backgrounds in football, our shared aspirations to make a difference to local communities and to enhance the impact of the work of EitC. During the process it became apparent that my personal feelings were that football had the potential to make a real difference to people's lives and local communities, which echoed EitC vision. Whilst I sense that EitC senior management and EitC coaches thought of me as a researcher, throughout the process they appeared to realise and came to understand my desire to help enhance the impact and effectiveness of their work to help local people and communities. This desire is something that I share with *some* of those involved.

3.4 Research framework

Action research has been discussed in detail within the introduction of the thesis, it frames the whole of the thesis and Study 1 is positioned as the first element of this (i.e., the reconnaissance phase, see Figure 3.2). The procedural tenets of action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) are adopted to explore, monitor and assist in the development of 'change' in working practice within EitC. Specifically, the research attempts to build a better understanding of what constitutes effective football-based community engagement with regards to promoting positive health improvement. Action research utilises a spiral of reflective cycles that include a reconnaissance and action planning phase, implementation (of change/if any) and monitoring phase which include the processes and consequences of the change (Elliot, 1991; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

(typically 2 days per week) (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Eder and Corsaro, 1999). The researcher attempted to develop a clear understanding of what daily life was like for the practitioners, become accustomed to and understand the physical and institutional settings in which they lived, the daily routine of activities, the beliefs that guided their actions and the linguistic and other semiotic systems that mediated all their contexts and activities (Eder and Corsaro, 1999). Participant observations were utilised in a variety of settings throughout the study (Lofland and Lofland, 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 and Tedlock, 2000), in order to balance the notions of engagement and trust, whilst adopting an (initially) objective lens, the researcher then actively engaged in both observation and participation and participant-observation (Hong and Duff, 2002).

Evaluation of a football-oriented school-based community coaching intervention

The reconnaissance phase (see Figure 3.4), included an evaluation of a 16-week football-oriented school based community coaching intervention (targeting primary school children) for the researcher to better understand the nature of existence within the workplace (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). This multi-method evaluation adopted throughout the reconnaissance phase and specifically within the 16-week football oriented school based community coaching intervention (including attendance at each 1 hour coaching session per week) across 4 schools, allowed the researcher to adopt a range of informal, open and relaxed approaches (e.g., conversations) to data collection. Such an approach enabled the researcher to explore issues as they evolved ‘on the ground’. The researcher also attended some classes and events within each school on an ad-hoc basis prior to and throughout the 16-week intervention period. This allowed the researcher to develop a closeness, trust and familiarisation with the children and the environment and decreased the likelihood of children adjusting their behaviours due to the researcher’s presence,

the potential of lies and evasion further on in the study (Ennew, 1994; Gilbourne and Richardson, 1996; Bryman, 2001).

The Reconnaissance Phase

Immersion within the workplace (EitC), principles of ethnography, participant observation.

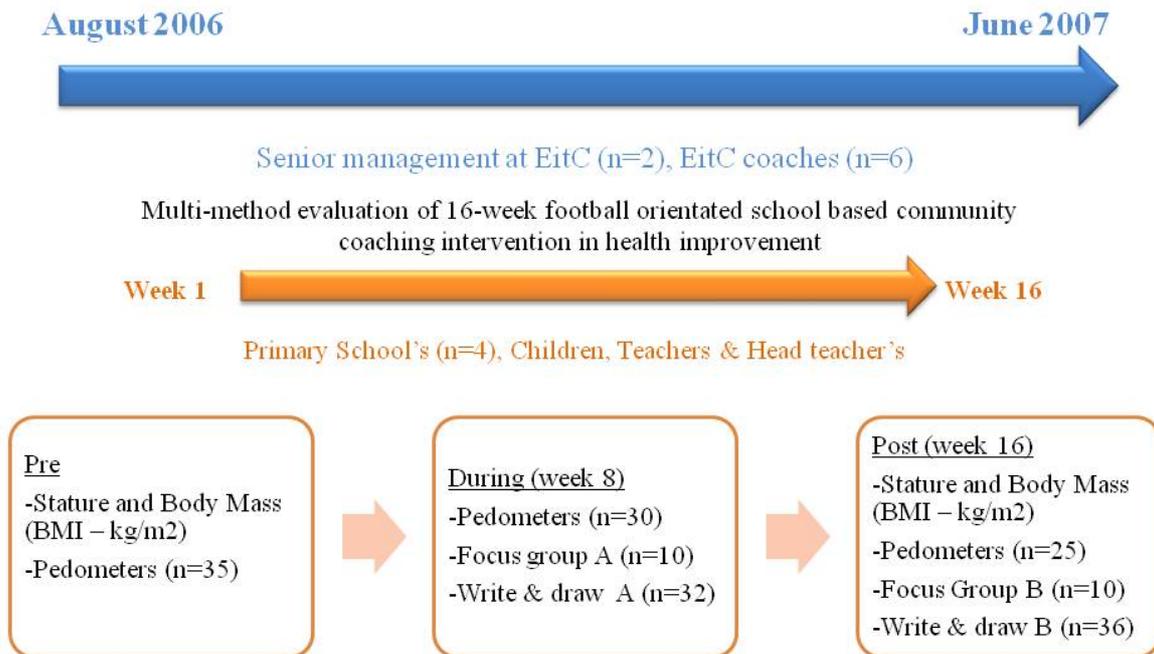


Figure 3.3 The reconnaissance phase: detailing elements of research and participants involved within the Study 1.

The researcher's personal reflections and observations were recorded through informal field notes and a reflective diary. The informal field notes were continually developed in an attempt to capture the context, culture and practice of EitC (McFee, 1992; Krane & Baird, 2005). When the researcher felt a more flexible method of data collection was needed (i.e., assumed note taking may jeopardise the quality of conversation) mental notes were made (Atkinson, 1981). These mental notes were typical key words and quotes from participants (i.e., children, teachers, parents, EitC coaches, senior management) were jotted on a pad (Lofland, 1995) and developed at the end of the day in detailed reflective field notes (Lofland, 1995).

The participants

The reconnaissance phase involved EitC coaches (n=6) and senior management (n=2) within EitC. Primary schools (n=4) which were located in deprived areas of Liverpool were involved in the intervention. The schools were chosen independently of the researcher by the EitC coaches. The intervention was delivered within the school setting either indoor (typically in the school hall or gymnasium) or outside (typically on the school field or playground). Each school received 16 coaching sessions, each lasting approximately 1 hour. The sessions were delivered during the academic year and took place straight after school. The link teacher or head teacher at each primary school (n=4) pre-selected the children for each coaching session. Each teacher invited 16 children to participate within the intervention as this coincided with the coach-to-child ratio best practice guidelines (n=57) (The FA, 2014). Consent was obtained from all parent/guardians of the 57 children (see Appendix B) and from the Head teacher of the schools (see Appendix C). All children were in Grades 4-6 (ages 8-11 years) and were given a participant information sheet (see Appendix D) prior to also giving their consent (see Appendix E).

A multi-method approach to child research

Oakley et al., (1995) highlighted that the collection of information from children requires ‘a special approach’, which involves diverse skills and different research methods (Mahon et al., 1996). To build a clear picture of children’s beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and barriers to physical activity a consolidation of methods was required (i.e., methods that best accommodate children) (Porcellato et al., 1999). This between-methods (i.e., write and draw, focus groups and pedometer data) triangulation approach allowed for the research to utilise both quantitative and qualitative methods to better understand the behaviour and activity profiles of children (Cohen and Manion, 1994). This approach allows for a thorough representation of the experiences of the children involved. Moreover, Breitmayer et al., (1993) highlighted that the outcomes from each

approach can be used to cross-validate the research findings, subsequently enhancing confidence and rigour in the results.

An overview of the child-focused methods

The measurements of stature and body mass of each child participant were taken, to calculate BMI (kg/m^2). Child specific focus groups (Frey and Fontana, 1991), write and draw inquiry (Porcellato et al., 1999) and pedometer scores (Stewart, 2004) within physical activity diaries (Boddy et al., 2006) were also utilised with the child participants.

Body mass index

Each child's stature was measured (pre and post intervention) to the nearest 1mm using the Leicester height measure (Birmingham, England), and body mass was calculated to the nearest 100g using Seca weighing scales (Birmingham, England) (Lohman, Roche and Martorell, 1988). This information was then formulated to categorise the body mass index (BMI) of the child participants. BMI is defined as weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in metres and is widely used amongst health professionals worldwide (Chinn & Rona, 2004). Children were then categorised as either underweight, normal weight, overweight/obese (see Chinn and Rona, 2004).

Pedometers

Pedometers (TK-08, Polygon, Taiwan) were used to measure physical activity in the children for two week-days and two week-end days (Stewart et al., 2004). The children were introduced to the pedometer and its function by the first author, along with other recording methods (i.e., within the physical activity diary). Pedometer step-count data was recorded by the children pre-intervention (n=35), during (week 8, n=30) and post intervention (week 16, n=25).

The utilisation of pedometers and physical activity diaries (see Appendix E) enabled cross checking of activity patterns. Pedometer steps were recorded just before bedtime at the end of each day. The children recorded their results within the physical activity diaries. Counts below 1,000 or above 30,000 steps were treated as missing data (Rowe et al., 2004). Step counts were compared to recommendations made by Tudor-Locke et al., (2004) when exploring recommended levels of youth physical activity (using pedometer-assessed steps/day) related to healthy body composition. Tudor-Locke et al., (2004) recommended that >12,000 steps/day for girls and >15,000 steps/day for boys should be accumulated. Whilst not a definitive measure of actual physical activity (Basett, 2000; Freedson and Miller, 2000), pedometers are an effective vehicle for the collation of information regarding the step count of the children. Stewart et al., (2004) and Leenders et al., (2000) both recognise the value of pedometers in measuring free-living physical activity. Pedometer records were recorded within a child-specific physical activity diary.

Further information regarding the lifestyle of the children was drawn from child specific physical activity diaries. These diaries were formulated to help better understand the physical activity patterns and behaviour across two week days and two weekend days (Boddy et al., 2006). The physical activity diaries were given to children pre-intervention (n=35), during (week 8, n=30) and post intervention (week 16, n=25). The diaries have been used to compliment the pedometer records and provide both insight and context to other data collection techniques to help understand the children's activity, lifestyle, behaviour and activity within and out of school.

Child focus groups

It has taken time for the shift and recognition of the role of children in structuring and making sense of their life, as they live it (Woodhead, Light and Carr, 1991; Hill, Laybourn and Borland, 1996). The focus group was adopted, as it provides the researcher with an opportunity to talk and engage directly with the child participants in order to better understand, elaborate and clarify

ideas and issues (Baker, 1994). The focus group enables participant conversation (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999) and gives the child a voice in the search for valuable insights into their thoughts and feelings (Hill, Laybourn and Borland, 1996; Mahon et al., 1996). Focus groups were utilised to more easily engage with the children (Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell and Britten, 2002), at week 8 (n=10) (see Table 3.1) and week 16 (n=10) (see Table 3.2) of the programme. Whilst there is detailed instructions on 'how to' carry out focus group interviews with young children (CSAP, 1994; Vaughn et al., 1996), these guides are often idealistic and do not reflect a structure that can be utilised in the 'real world' of practice (Porcellato, Dugdill and Springett, 2002). Within this study a child-specific approach as advocated by Vaughn et al., (1996) was adopted. The content and focus for discussion within each focus group was underpinned by previous literature related to the primary aim of each focus group. Focus Group A, at week 8 explored the children's understanding, perceptions, barriers, and habits toward physical activity. Focus Group B, at week 16 explored the children's perceptions of the EitC football oriented school-based community coaching intervention. Table 3.1 and 3.2. below explore the structure of the focus groups A and B, respectively.

Table 3.1. The focus group A conducted at week 8: physical activity

<u>Phase 1</u>
Aim: 'Introduction & Familiarisation', this was the opportunity for the author to relax the children and encourage openness. Whilst reiterating the confidentiality of the conversations within the focus group the author demonstrated the need for clarity in speech, patience to express opinions, duration and purpose of the group discussion (Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell and Britten, 2002).
<u>Phase 2</u>
Aim: To develop an understanding and bring clarity for the children of what constituted physical activity, inactivity, healthy and unhealthy behaviours. The children engaged in a task whereby they must work together to identify whether stereotypical activities and/or foods were in fact active, inactive, healthy or unhealthy. This group work allowed the children to begin expressing their opinions within their discussion (Williams, Wetton, Moon, 1989).
<u>Phase 3</u>
Aim: To specifically build an understanding of what the children's perceptions of, and habits towards and most enjoyable physical activity were. The author then prompts discussion on and around the children's negative perceptions of the barriers toward physical activity. This information would help assist in building a clearer picture of the children's behaviour and lifestyles (Baranowski, Perry and Parcel, 2000).
<u>Phase 4</u>
Aim: To develop an understanding of the barriers to physical activity (similar to above), however with an emphasis on why others do not take part. Here the first author wanted the children to express their perceptions of why other children were inactive and what could be done to help these children become more active (Backett and Alexander, 1991; Kaladjian, 1996).
<u>Phase 5</u>
Aim: To bring the focus group to a close by giving the children an opportunity to reflect on the previous discussions.

Table 3.2. The focus group B conducted at week 16: the EitC session

<u>Phase 1</u>
<p>Aim: To introduce and clarify of the purpose and duration of the focus group. Here the author emphasised the importance of the children’s views and opinions concerning the EitC intervention and how there were now actively engaged in developing the intervention to ensure future sessions included the most enjoyable and fun elements (Telama, 1997; Porcellato, Dugdill and Springett, 2002; Westerstahl et al., 2005).</p>
<u>Phase 2</u>
<p>Aim: To utilise the author’s attendance at the session within the intervention. Here the author and children reminisce on the activities and content delivered within the intervention. With each activity the author prompted responses and discussion regarding the children’s perception of a specific activity. Phase 2 also encouraged children to illuminate their opinions and reflections with examples and feelings (Raitakari et al., 1994; Craig, et al., 1996; Telama, 1997; Westerstahl et al., 2005).</p>
<u>Phase 3</u>
<p>Aim: To explore the positive and negative aspects of the intervention. As in phase 2 the author probes deeper into opinions and expressions seeking examples, feelings and where relevant, potential ways to promote or prevent similar experiences in the future (Kaladjian 1996; Porcellato, Dugdill and Springett, 2002).</p>
<u>Phase 4</u>
<p>Aim: To draw a close to the focus group through the ‘Aladdin’s Lamp’ activity. Here the children were asked to recall their most memorable activity/element, and make their ‘wish’ for the future concerning the EitC intervention (Hill and Triseliotis 1990; Jewett, 1984).</p>

The focus groups were facilitated by the researcher, in the absence of potentially dominant figures (e.g., teachers), in order to encourage the children to speak openly and freely (Biddle, Fox, and Boutcher, 2000). The focus groups were recorded with a Dictaphone and with a video camera. The dual approach helped assist with transcription and add additional contextual features for reflection when transcribing. The researcher highlights notions of ‘trust’ and confidentiality with the children within the introduction to the focus group. Moreover, it has been highlighted that building a rapport and/or trust with children (usually) involves extensive ethnographic observations and conversations (James, 1993; Opie, 1994). In this regard the researcher, prior to the initial focus group (Focus Group A at week 8), had spent many hours (typically through 2/3 visits per week) with the children. The researcher adopted a voice or

mode of communication that recognised the children's level of cognitive and linguistic development. Furthermore, the utilisation of pictures, material and aids within the familiar setting of the school enabled the researcher to communicate in a way that children would more readily understand (Garbino, Stott, Erikson Institute, 1992; Spencer and Flin, 1991; Porcellatto, Dugdill and Springett, 2002). By adopting varying methods and tools to engage the children within the focus group (see Table 3.1 and Table 3.2) the researcher ensured the children would not become bored (Hill, Laybourn and Borland, 1996), whilst also ensuring that the length of the focus group(s) did not pass 45 minutes. With this the size and gender mix of the focus groups were considered. The researcher adopted suggestions that the optimum size of group should be 5 and the age range should be kept small (Greenbaum, 1987; Hill, 1992; Hill, Laybourn and Borland, 1995; Porcellato, Dugdill and Springett, 2002). Whilst Greenbaum (1987) and Hill, Laybourn and Borland (1996) adopted single sex approaches the researcher felt that given the extensive reconnaissance and subsequent knowledge accumulation and understanding of the characters and personalities within the groups of children, that a mixed sex group would not be detrimental to the construction of the focus groups, but through informed strategic selection the children would have an optimum experience.

Given the need to create a relaxed atmosphere within the focus group the researcher sought to divert thinking away from Everton and/or football specifically. Whilst engaged in the intervention the researcher had aimed to develop an informal, relaxed rapport with the children. By dressing casually (i.e., jeans and t-shirt), avoiding EitC apparel, the researcher clearly distinguished himself, as neither a teacher nor a coach. This enabled the researcher to set a relaxed 'non-school' atmosphere to encourage the children to converse freely and openly. The children that engaged in the focus group were offered the opportunity to complete an additional write and draw inquiry.

Write and draw methods

The use of drawings as a research vehicle (in isolation) has had a mixed success rate (Pridmore and Bendelo, 1995; Punch, 2002; Coats, 2004). Both Pridmore and Bendelow (1995) and Bendelow et al., (1996) now use other research methods such as write and draw and focus groups in an attempt to tackle concerns that researchers have regarding their ability to draw out the meaning of an image or the difficulty they may find in locating any assumptions against the true meaning of the child (Thomas & Silk, 1990; Coad & Lewis, 2004). In this regard, the researcher utilised the approach of combining both focus group and write and draw findings to support one another as advocated by Pridmore and Bendelow (1995) and Bendelow et al., (1996). Wetton (1990) found the write and draw investigative technique, as a successful method to be used with children. Pridmore and Bendelow (1995) found that drawing was a more effective method to explore the belief systems of young children. Moreover, the write and draw method has been utilised by other school-based research projects (Porcellato et al., 1999; Knowles et al., 2013), as it simulates day-to-day school activity, whilst adopting a child-centred approach that enables children to participate at an individual level whilst providing valuable insights into the thinking of children across a range of levels of cognitive development (Williams et al., 1989).

During the multi-method approach two write and draw inquiries were employed. The purpose of the first session, write and draw 'A' employed at week 8 was to develop an understanding of where, who with and when children take part in physical activity outside of school. Write and draw 'B', employed at week 16, aimed to explore the children's emotions, perceptions and attitudes towards the EitC coaching intervention. Children were required to write and draw their responses to a specific 'invitation', which was read aloud by the researcher and also written across the top page of the paper given to each child.

Summary of child focused approach

The collective methods employed throughout the reconnaissance phase that focused on the children offer a valuable data collection process. The physical activity diaries, compliment the pedometer step data and information collected from the focus group and write and draw inquiries, which assist in the construction of activity profiles for the child participants engaged in the intervention (Lantz et al., 2008; Vadiveloo, Zhu and Quatromoni, 2009).

EitC coach interviews

During the reconnaissance phase the researcher utilised individual semi-structured interviews (Biddle et al., 2001; Krane and Baird, 2005) with the EitC coaches (n=6). DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p315) stated that “*the aim of the research interview is to gain an insight into an individual’s perspective and experiences of a particular issue.*”

The importance of familiarisation and engagement is critical in the development of trust and rapport between the researcher and researched (i.e., the author and coaches). Engaging in this process prior to data collection has been shown to be favourable for researchers who want to gather rich, meaningful, contextual data. Fontana and Frey (1994) argued the importance of this researcher-coach relationship for trust and confidence. Whilst the researcher attended coaching sessions and spent additional time within the school setting, a significant amount of the other 2.5 days over the 10-month period of the reconnaissance phase was spent with the EitC coaches. This regular often informal contact helped the researcher establish trust, a relationship and closeness with the EitC coaches. The researchers own extensive experience of ‘coaching’ within a community physical activity engagement environment also informed the construction process. The researcher has extensive years of experience working within football in the community, primary schools and specifically school sport, youth sport and youth work, whilst also

developing a comprehensive vocabulary of multi-sport community coaching practices and qualification. This undoubtedly supported the process of building rapport, trust and acceptance in a coaching environment. Whilst the researchers ongoing engagement and ‘immersion’ within (all aspects of) EitC opened the door into the day-to-day life and routine of EitC organisation and its staff, it was important to grasp an understanding of the EitC coaches’ perceptions of their role, experiences, knowledge, philosophies and practice.

In an attempt to ensure data collection days/meetings were informal, relaxed and authentic (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006) the researcher typically, made efforts to run the interviews in a comfortable and natural environment. This involved interviews in the kitchen, school classroom, office, but also extended to more untraditional research settings (but familiar researcher-coach settings) such as the local public house and the Gwladys Street (a football seating end at Goodison Park, the home to Everton Football Club). The researcher would dress in his Everton apparel, make drinks for both the researcher and the coach to drink throughout the discussion and importantly kept the process relaxed, informal and open. In this regard, the researcher shared the academic background and purpose for the interview. Moreover, all of the coaches had a prior awareness of my role at EitC and provided subsequent consent (Appendix G).

The semi-structured interview schedule utilised various phases/topic areas to guide the discussion (see Table 3.3). This schedule was deductively developed alongside pre-determined theoretical concepts, previous literature and with respect to informal contact between the interviewer and interviewee. The researcher’s own extensive (craft) experience of ‘coaching’ within a community physical activity engagement environment also informed the construction process. Triangulation and pilot interviews (Biddle et al., 2001) were undertaken to establish a more credible protocol, where reviews and refinements were considered. This period allowed the researcher to refine interview techniques following the engagement in interview training offered

by the Psychology and Development Research Group at the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, Liverpool John Moores University.

Table 3.3. The interview schedule for EitC coaches

<p>A. Introduction</p> <p><u>Aim:</u> To highlight the importance of the interview and clarify expected times, aims, structure and reinforce confidentiality.</p>
<p>B. Background & Aspirations</p> <p><u>Aim:</u> To discuss past experiences/work and generally talk football. This then led onto careers aims and aspirations (Weiss and Ferrer-Caja, 2002).</p>
<p>C. The Coach and Coaching</p> <p><u>Aim:</u> To explore the aims of EitC coaches, their roles, and their coaching styles (Lyle, 2002; Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2009).</p>
<p>D. Beliefs and Philosophy</p> <p><u>Aim:</u> To explore the coach/practitioner’s philosophy and purposeful approach towards coaching (Kretchmar, 1994; McCallister et al., 2000).</p>
<p>E. Understanding and experience of behaviour and/or lifestyles change</p> <p><u>Aim:</u> To explore the practitioner’s past experiences working towards what their knowledge, understanding and perception of health improvement programmes and importantly, how they perceived they could tackle it (Cross and Lyle, 1999).</p>
<p>F. End of interview</p> <p><u>Aim:</u> To provide an opportunity to thank for the participant for their time and knowledge</p>

3.6. Data analysis and representation

Given the scope and extent of the reconnaissance phase, it appears pertinent to outline the specific data analysis and representation methods for each part of the methods that require such further explanation.

Child focus groups

Focus group were listened to, watched and transcribed by the researcher, which produced 52 pages and 28 pages of single spaced lines of content and brief contextual points for Focus Group A at week 8 and Focus Group B at week 16 respectively. Data was transcribed verbatim

and analysed using the principles of content analysis (Scanlan, Ravizza and Stein, 1989; Côté, Salmela, Baria and Russel, 1993). The basic tenets of content analysis allowed for groups or clusters of themes to be gathered. This also enabled the understanding and emergence of key issues and/or themes from within the focus groups data. The results from these are highlighted through text indentation and single spaced lines.

Write and draw

During the multi-method approach two write and draw inquiries were employed. The purpose of the first session (i.e., Write and Draw A) employed at week 8 (n=32) was to develop an understanding of where, who with and when children take part in physical activity outside of school. Write and Draw B, employed at week 16 (n=28), aimed to explore the children's emotions, perceptions and attitudes towards the EitC coaching intervention.

Often researchers would cross reference the meaning of pictures drawn with the respective child's meaning; however within this research member checking did not take place. Following administration of the write and draw inquiries, coding categories were developed from emerging themes, for use in analysing the responses (Porcellato et al., 1999; Kondracki et al., 2002). Inductive analysis was applied to the data sets whereby categories and key order themes were formulated by interpretations as near as possible to the data (Tuckett, 2005).

The researcher utilised a constant comparison approach outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) whereby the images and writing were read and re-read. This continual comparison allowed for images that were thought to represent the same concept could be grouped together and assigned an appropriate label. Following this approach in isolation the researcher engaged in peer triangulation to ensure overall consensus and that key order themes matched representative labels. Within the results and discussion section visual images and written text is used alongside more generic content analysis. This aims to offer a representation of the children's unique and

individualistic ideas, interpretations and perspectives to the reader (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999).

EitC coach interviews

Biddle and colleagues (2001) highlighted the importance of providing a detailed set of procedural explanations, in order to enhance the credibility of the interview process. This level of procedural credibility should also be evident during the data analysis process (e.g., Hanton and Jones, 1999). The face-to-face interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using the principles of content analysis and the process outlined below (Scanlan et al., 1989; Côté, Salmela, Baria & Russel, 1993). Further information from coaches through the form of self report interviews, will be used to support findings within the face-to-face interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were listened to and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Three of these interviews were held between the researcher and the EitC coaches (i.e., face to face). This produced 12 pages of single spaced lines of content and brief contextual points. Three documents were also produced separately, by other FitC coaches (n=3) following an informal off the record discussion with the researcher, following which, the FitC coaches populated their answers surrounding the interview questions. The researcher then engaged in a period of close reading in order to become immersed in the data (Sparkes, 2005). At this stage initial ideas and thoughts were recorded. Following this, principles of content analysis were adopted by the researcher in order to identify and code themes arising from the data (Elo and Kyngas, 2008). The analysis was then read and re-read in isolation from the research team by the researcher following coding, which is considered both practical and preferred in circumstances of prolonged engagement and a developed researcher-coach relationship (Janesick, 2003). As such, this analysis may be difficult to replicate or repeat by others with different experiences, the rapport in place and those in different paradigms. It appears pertinent that 'I' (the researcher)

disclose my bias and philosophical position at this point, to help ‘you’ (the reader) in understanding and interpreting my results.

The aims and objective of this chapter was to:

Aim 1:

Reconnaissance Phase: Explore the effectiveness of a football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the broader working practice within EitC.

Objectives:

- I. Conduct a multi-method intervention evaluation of EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.
- II. Explore working practice and factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.

This required both openness and dialogue with key players within the intervention and organisation (i.e., the coaches). This approach aligns with the interpretivist paradigm, allowing opportunities to make sense and seek understanding and clarification of others’ perspectives (Taylor, 2008). Essentially, I was able to access and develop an understanding of the meanings, reasons, and insight into human action, which in this case was the coach’s actions (Bryman, 2001). The transcriptions were then analysed using content analysis procedures (Scanlan et al., 1989; Côté et al., 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The content analysis procedure can be described as “...[the] *procedure that allows the investigator to organise raw data into interpretable and meaningful themes and categories and allows these to emerge from the quotation.*” (Hanton and Jones, 1999, p.6). As advocated by various qualitative researchers, it was decided to adopt a combined approach of deductive and inductive procedures (see Patton, 1980, Scanlan et al., 1989; Patton, 2002). Given the relatively, small numbers of coaches involved in this study the researcher has used the content analysis process to develop key verbatim quotations, which were then presented to two senior colleagues by means of triangulation (Shenton, 2004). The colleagues critically

questioned the analysis and cross-examined the data and themes. This allowed for alternative interpretations of the data and perspectives. These were discussed, as were the emergent themes until an acceptable level of consensus was reached. The process of using verbatim transcriptions and triangulation consensus procedures offers credibility to the research (Priest, et al., 2002).

As seen throughout this data analysis and representation section, the researcher will seek to fully capture the voice and reality of the participants' existence the data is presented as a series of themed narrative accounts which draw on the participants' own words, experiences and realities (Polkinghorne, 1988; 2007). Verbatim citations (and written quotes) have been used directly from interview transcripts and included in the results/discussion section to illustrate key themes. The voices of the participants are presented in *italics* within the text. Pseudonyms are used for all participants throughout.

Overview of approach for fields notes and personal reflections

Staying close to the data has been championed as one of the most powerful means of telling the story (Janesick, 1994), whilst interpreting data in the participant's language, rather than that of the researcher (Dale, 1996). Throughout the results and discussion the researcher aimed to highlight the key issues that emerged during the reconnaissance phase. Verbatim citations are utilised to illustrate the contextual features of the participants that serve to illuminate the rich detail of the collected data and is identified in *italics*.

In order to 'bring to life' the reality that I (the researcher) faced during the extensive ethnographic phase of work undertaken, it seems appropriate to include my personal experiences of being immersed with this environment as an 'insider'. These come both as narrative vignettes, reflective 'stop offs' throughout the chapter to contextualise the position of the author, the participants and the environment at a point of time. This approach of author involved text is a genre championed by (Gilbourne and Richardson, 2006), in which the researcher is presented as the narrator using a first person writing style (Jones, 2002) to contextualise the data collected

(Tierney, 2002; Gilbourne and Richardson, 2005) and move the story on for the reader. These reflective 'stop offs', field note extracts and my personal reflections are evidenced as indented, single spaced lines and a smaller font (.10) within the text. Pseudonyms are used for children, teachers, schools, community coaches, EitC coaches, staff and senior management throughout.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (Part A)

STUDY 1: Reconnaissance Phase

Chapter 3 Study 1 Aims:

Aim 1: Reconnaissance Phase: Explore the effectiveness of a football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the broader working practice within EitC.

Objective 1: Reconnaissance Phase:

- I. Conduct a multi-method intervention evaluation of EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.**
- II. Explore working practice and factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an EitC football orientated school based community coaching intervention.

3.7. Results and discussion (Part A)

The following section seeks to progress through the research methods outlined exploring the effectiveness of the EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement. The results from each method will be explored and discussed prior to detailing some key findings and leading into the results and discussion (Part B).

The children: attrition rate

Throughout the time spent within the school settings (typically 3 times per week) the researcher was able to build a rapport and trust with the teacher, children and school staff. This enabled the researcher to build a greater understanding of the role of the link teacher in school sport/activity, the working practice, philosophy and culture of the school. With this came many informal conversations, discussions and meetings that enabled the researcher to capture not only a greater understanding of the teacher's role within, but also their perceptions of, the intervention.

Firstly, it appears pertinent to draw attention to the descending child participation figures in the data (i.e., particularly with respect to the completion of physical activity diaries and pedometer scores). Of the original 57 children that were involved pre-intervention, 14 dropped out before the first session. The intervention 'drop out' rate was 54% (n= 31). This relatively high attrition rate appeared to go unnoticed, unrecognised or even investigated by the EitC coaches or the teachers.

Ok Sandra (Primary School Teacher), we have experienced quite a bit of drop out with the children on the programme. Do you have any idea why this is and how we could possibly get them back in?. 'Really? I didn't know. Nothing has been said to me?

I thought, how can she be surprised? Does she not know what's going on? I asked Sandra why she thought the children had left the programme and she didn't really have any ideas. She said 'all the children love football and most play in the school team'. What!? Great they love football; they play in the school football team ... so why were they dropping out? This is free football from a Premier League Club!

Teachers tended to highlight that they tried to choose children '*who enjoy football*' (Sandra the year 6 teacher and primary link teacher of Trinity Primary), '*who were well behaved, as a reward or those who*

were poorly behaved as an incentive' (Jill the Head teacher of Holy Cross Primary School), or highlighted that they *'asked the children who wanted to be involved'* (Dennis, the Head teacher of Kingsway Primary School). It appeared that there was no consistent inclusion, selection criteria and/or guidance for participation in the intervention (i.e., neither from the schools nor EitC). The selection criteria may be a key to understanding the poor state of attrition and subsequently something that must be addressed in future programmes.

Although poor adherence is not uncommon within interventions its presence is cause for concern especially given that the children were apparently already 'active' in their school football team (Van Sluijs, McMinn and Griffin, 2007). Maintaining adherence and participation should be the cornerstone of interventions seeking to promote positive health change. It was apparent that I must explore this further within the coaching sessions, in a bid to fully understand coaching practice, delivery and the subsequent impact on the children's experience.

It was also relevant, especially in line with this qualitative child-focused approach, to ask the children *"what's going on?"* at this stage in the research.

The intervention was progressing and there didn't appear to be any interest in the fact children were dropping out. I felt I had to at least get some feedback from the children, as no one else was!

I arrived at Kingsway Primary School 15 minutes early for a session. I knew today I had to find some of the children who had dropped out and find out why. I entered the school via the main foyer and greeted the two of the ladies who worked the reception with a smile and a nod. This was received by Val (the senior of the two) who 'buzzed' me through the electronic door. I headed upstairs to the children's classrooms. It was the end of the day and there were children everywhere, rushing to find bags, sweatshirts and to get out and home. I approached the coat hangers and shouted to a few familiar faces. After a few more shouts and a reassuring *'I only need a minute'* I managed to speak to some children to ask why they had left the programme, Claire (10 year old girl) *'I don't know I don't really like football'*. Asia a 9 year old girl similarly never attended any of sessions because they clashed with Drama classes. *'Girls, why did you join the sessions then?'* the girls quickly fired back *'Mr Hopwood (the head teacher) told us we had to'*. After, quickly dealing with two girls I spoke to Ibrahim (9 year old boy) who had dropped out after 5 sessions *'Ibby, how's it going? Long-time no see? Where have you been?'* Ibby smiles and looks all around before saying *'just about like'*, *'About? About where? How come you haven't been attending?'* To this Ibrahim replied, *'the sessions aren't challenging enough'*. I explored this comment further with Ibrahim, specifically seeking his expectations and his perceptions before speaking with other children. It appeared that the sessions were in some cases 'too challenging' and 'too structured', which frustrated the children, specifically Ibrahim who didn't want to admit this given his normally confident and outgoing character. In essence, I knew that all that these kids wanted was to 'just play football and have fun'.

The children highlighted negative memories and experiences related to the intervention. This is something I shared, however we will come back to this later within the results and discussion Part B.

The children

Of the children involved within the intervention 80% (n=28) were recorded as being underweight, 8 children were normal weight and 2 children were classed as overweight/obese (Chinn and Rona, 2004). Post-intervention 74% (n=26) of the children were recorded as being underweight, 9 children were normal weight and 3 children were classed overweight/obese.

The 2 children whom were classified as overweight/obese stayed within that category throughout the intervention. It is important to note that one of these children (John) was part of the small number that showed positive changes in their step count data (i.e., improved their mean steps/day per-initiative to post initiative). Without entering a debate regarding the validity of the pedometer data, figure 2.4 details John's profile throughout the intervention.

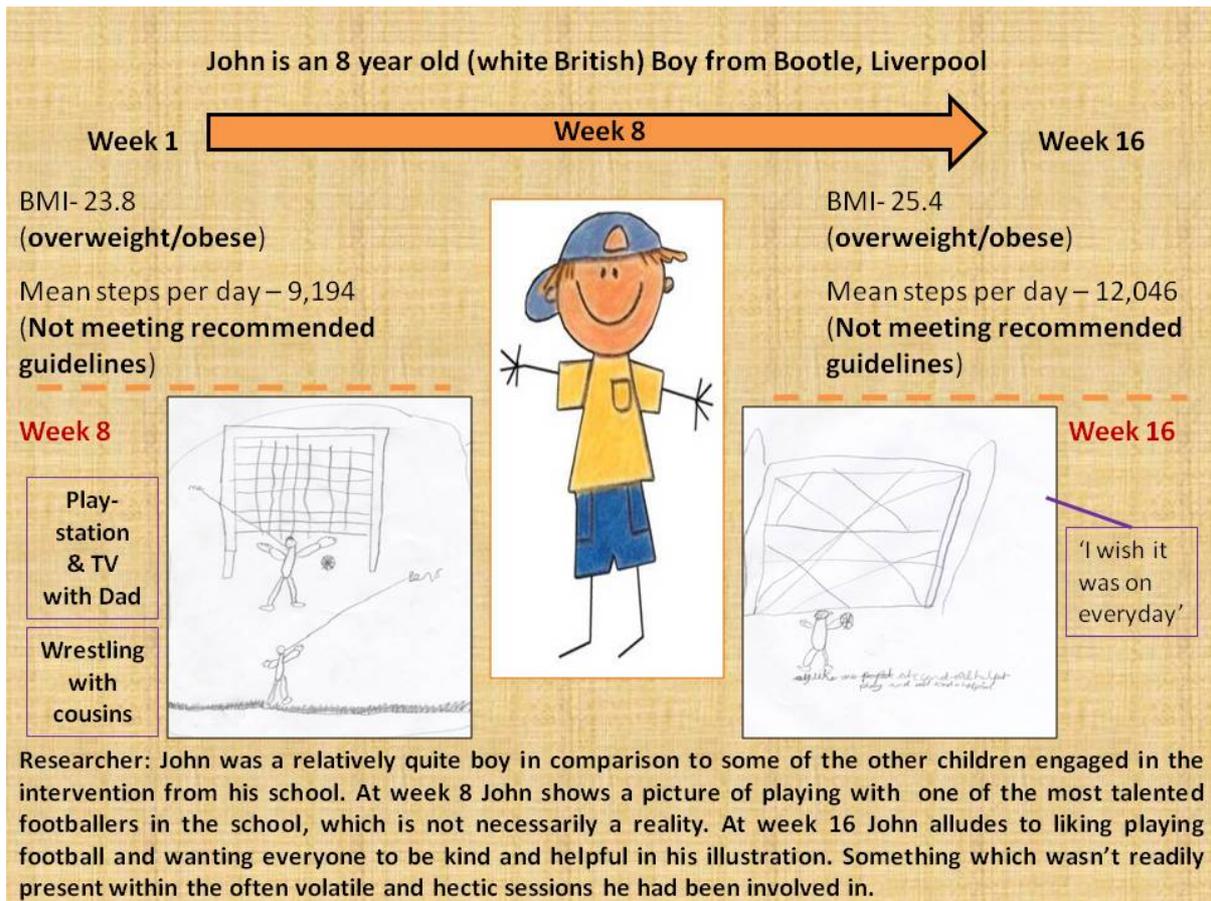


Figure 3.4: An overview of the data collected surrounding John, an 8 year boy within the intervention.

It is interesting to see the Johns *data* against his perceptions of the intervention and the researcher perspective. John would be classified as an ideal child to target for a health improvement intervention. Moreover, he appears to enjoy it, especially people being kind and helpful within the coaching sessions. However, children being kind and helpful were absent from the session that John took part in. In an interesting way this contributes to (background) concerns regarding the flow, structure and content of the coaching sessions. Perhaps John was trying to tell us something?

The BMI data suggest that the intervention had (through no strategic intent) recruited a mixed range of children across the BMI spectrum outlined by Chin and Rhona (2004). The lack of strategic focus in the selection criteria is a concern. Health improvement work of this nature

must seek to embrace and include more 'at risk' or perhaps 'in need' populations (i.e. those not engaged in physical activity and/or are overweight or obese). Indeed, football has been used to target the most at risk or hard to reach (men and families) due to its mass appeal (Pringle et al., 2011; Richardson et al., 2011; Jenkins and James, 2012). To enhance the potential effectiveness of an intervention of this nature a more strategic selection criteria is required to target those at risk. Within a school setting these may be the children watching the children play football at recess and lunch breaks or 'skirting' around the football pitches, as opposed to those actively involved in football within and outside of school.

Pedometer scores

Pedometer step-count data was recorded by the children pre-intervention (n=35), during (week 8, n=30) and post intervention (week 16, n=25) with the child specific physical activity diaries. The reduction in completion is in line with the attrition rate of participation in the intervention.

Pre-intervention (n=35) data indicated that 42% (n=15) of the children were meeting the recommended guidelines for mean steps/day (girls >12,000 or boys >15,000 steps per day) (Tudor-Locke et al., 2004). Twenty children were not meeting these guidelines. Post-intervention 32% (n=8) of children were meeting the recommended guidelines for mean steps/day; however 68% (n=17) of children were not.

This data suggests that the majority of children were not active 'enough' to meet recommended guidelines for steps/day. However, this doesn't appear to be the case from the other (presented and forthcoming) reconnaissance data (i.e., teacher feedback, the focus group data, write and draw illustrations and the researchers own contextual experiences), which suggest that the majority of the children were active, with their friends and family and were engaged in a number of physical activities and sports within and outside of school.

Despite these other findings suggesting that the children were physically active, it appeared from the step count data that they were not active enough to meet the recommended guidelines for mean steps per day. Only a small number of children (12%, n=7) showed minor behaviour changes across the interventions duration (i.e., increases in mean steps/day from pre-intervention to post-intervention). However, only 3 of these children made positive improvements (i.e., from not meeting the recommended guidelines for mean steps/day pre-intervention, to meeting them post-intervention).

Tudor-Locke et al., (2004) recommended that >12,000 steps/day for girls and >15,000 steps/day for boys should be accumulated. Whilst not a definitive measure of actual physical activity (Basett, 2000; Freedson and Miller, 2000), pedometers are an effective vehicle for the collation of information regarding the step count of the children. Stewart et al., (2004) and Leenders et al., (2000) both recognise the value of pedometers in measuring free-living physical activity. Despite this, pedometry equipment has evolved significantly. The normal mainstream pedometer that can be purchased from 0.50p (or less) through to £6, however this technology often fails to meet the accuracy, validity and standard set by others, such as the Yamax Digi Walker (Tudor-Locke and Bassett, 2004). The latter cost more in the region of £20 and therefore require a greater amount of resources compared to that chosen by senior management within EitC.

It is important to highlight the collaborative nature of this project at this point. The intervention was a product of the meeting of an academic institute within higher education (Liverpool John Moores University), a major sports charity (Everton in the Community), a football club (Everton Football Club) and commercial sponsor (Greggs North West Plc) in a very innovative and in essence complex partnership. Initial intentions were to purchase high (or gold) standard pedometers that both met the sponsor (i.e., Greggs North West Plc) requirements and the needs of the research. After much negotiation and attempts to draw upon on the formal partnership

agreement we had no avail. We settled on the TK-08, Polygon (Taiwan) pedometers, which were used to measure physical activity in the children for two week-days and two week-end days (Stewart et al., 2004).



Figure 3.5 The pedometers used within the intervention embossed with the Liverpool John Moores University, Everton in the Community and Greggs North West Plc logos.

Reflective stop off

Partnership working

When I initially sat with the research team and I heard the term ‘collaborative action research’ coined for the first time, I guessed it meant working together to create an action and doing some research around it (that part wasn’t rocket science). Despite, having a few years under my belt working in some very complex community partnerships in even more complex communities, one would be forgiven for thinking half the battle was won in this project.

I mean, Greggs North West Plc and EitC were already positioned around the table and in agreement (contractible agreement) to commit, collaborate and achieve together. I didn’t envisage any problems, barriers or challenges. I guess a real sense of reflective naivety arises, as I think back to this time in the research project.

Within initial meetings we had discussed using accelerometers and further along in the research project played with the idea of actigraphs. When these were raised our lead contact within EitC’s senior management, he went straight to hard line costs (despite there being funding, if not an excess of funding for consumables). We began to negotiate between cost, quantity and quality!

Over a period of emails, and finally letters *we* (the research team) succumb to pressure, shifting from a quality (high standard) pedometer to one of the cheapest in the range. I wish *we* would have fought this battle, but (and this is a big but) our contact with Greggs North West Plc came through EitC. In turn, EitC held significant power (given we were accessing, albeit helping their organisation). Therefore, despite my reflective eagerness for ‘a fight’, I appreciate that this may have been counter-productive, given we (the research team) were clearly over a barrel.

The pedometer data suggests that the intervention does create some minor and positive changes in the children. This is both laudable and encouraging for interventions using football as a vehicle for health improvement. Whilst the pedometer data in general suggests the majority of children are inactive, other data suggests this may not be the case. Overall, the validity of the

pedometer data is under scrutiny. This element of the project appeared hostage to the collaborative nature of the project and the power brokers in this partnership - EitC.

Focus groups

Focus Group A delivered at week 8 (n=10) aimed to build an understanding of what the children believed constituted physical activity, whilst exploring their habits, perception's and barriers towards physical activity.

Within Focus Group A, it became clear that the children could ascertain the differences between healthy behaviour and unhealthy behaviour/lifestyles.

Researcher: So JANE (our fictional character), is inactive and un-healthy...what types of things will she do then?

Martyn: Watch television.

Jessie: Eat chips.

Some discussion from the children.

Alan: Be a couch potato!

Researcher: A couch potato, what types of things would a couch potato do?

Alana: Just sit down watching tele, and playing the PS2 all day.

Researcher: Playing computers, yeah.

Alan: Just not getting out doing stuff.

Izzy: Yeah eating bags of crisps all the time. Thats what they do (inactive people)

Izzy immitates eating a bag of crisps in one go.

The majority of children highlighted regularly taking part in physical activity with their friends and/or family because it was fun and enjoyable.

Researcher: So can you tell me who that you play with when you get home?

Jessie: Sometimes I play with Sophie and Charlie, but when me mum says I can go in the back garden, I go with amber on the trampoline.

Researcher: So its with you friends, Jess?

Izzy: I play with my sister in my back garden.

Carlie: Its fun.

Karl: You can play with ya' mates.

Jamie: Its exciting.

Researcher: Yes, I like playing football with my mates, and I get excited before that.

Charlie: It keeps you healthy.

Researcher: Yes, especially in your back garden!

Martyn: Outside sometimes I play with my brother, and sometimes I knock for John, Aaon and Kevin.

Aaron: Mostly John, Gary and Charlie.

Furthermore, it seemed apparent that the children were taking part in physical activity with their friends, but also found that engaging in physical activity was an opportunity to meet new friends.

Researcher ‘...so physical activity’s fun, that’s why you do it, is there any other reasons?’

Jessie (girl aged 10): ‘because you make new mates’

Jordan (boy aged 10): ‘In the ‘Lennies’ (a local youth club) they pay for us all to go swimming and you just have a blast together’.

The findings suggest the children have an understanding of both health and unhealthy behaviour.

Given the importance of healthy consumption, in its protection against childhood diseases (Knai et al., 2006) and given the fact that children are not meet current physical activity recommendations (Science Daily, 2007), their personal understanding and perceptions are encouraging. Despite this, it is worth acknowledging that physical activity (and behaviour/lifestyle) is influenced by a number of factors.

Spence and Lee (2003) highlight within the ecological model of physical activity is influenced by I) Intrapersonal (biological, psychological & behavioural), ii) Social (family support, modelling), and iii) Environmental (communities and facilities) (Sallis and Owen, 1999). It was Humber et al., (2006) that suggested these must be considered concurrently when addressing children’s activity. Therefore, whilst children have positive and valid perception of health and unhealthy behaviour, this may not necessarily translate into behavioural action.

As noted within the ecological model, the social element appears to play a key part in the activity of the children. In this regard, family and friends feature throughout the discourse within the focus groups surrounding the children activities and physical activities. The most consistent correlates of physical activity for children and adolescents (aged between 3-12 years) were time

spent outdoors, parental overweight status, intention to be active, physical activity preferences, perceived barriers (inverse), previous physical activity status, health diet and program/facility access (Sallis et al., 2000; Ferreira et al., 2006; Gustafson and Rhodes, 2006; Edwardson and Gorely, 2010). Given that such factors can all be controlled or (at least) influenced by the parent (Patrick and Nicklas, 2005; Sheperd et al., 2006), the family remains a key agent in children's physical activity.

The data collected during the focus groups suggested that the children use participation as a means to meet new friends, which is considered within the ecological model. As social support may be viewed as a means to create, support and maintain participation in physical activity, this finding is particularly important. Social support can be described as the existence or availability of people who we can rely upon, people who let us know they care, value and love us (Sarason et al., 1983). Football has been championed, as a means to attract children, adolescents, young people (and other hard to reach parts of society). Utilising (the vehicle of football participation) effectively, notions of team spirit and team work could offer a natural ground to develop and harness positive social relationships. There is evidence of positive impacts of sport (in general) on an individual participant's physical, mental and social health (Coalter, Allison and Taylor, 2000; Atherley, 2006; Green, 2004; Tacon, 2005; Kremer-Sadlik and Kim, 2007).

On a more social perspective, sport has been advocated as a vehicle for social cohesion (Green, 2004; Atherley, 2006; Kremer-Sadlik and Kim, 2007), develop community bonds, reduce crime and help people access positive mentors (Coalter, Allison and Taylor, 2000, Cameron and MacDougall, 2000; Green, 2004). Such interventions can have particularly positive impacts for young people from deprived areas (Putnam, 1993; Coalter, Allison and Taylor, 2000; Collins and Kay, 2003). Furthermore, researchers claim sport has the potential to build relationships and social cohesion across religious and economic lines, but there is little hard evidence to support this (Tacon, 2005; Delaney and Keaney, 2005). Moreover, in a 16 week intervention exploring

the development of social capital in football and running for inactive women it was found that team sports (i.e., football) have an advantage over individual sports in the development of social capital (Ottersen, Jeppesen and Krstrup, 2010). Krstrup et al., (2010) published an executive summary detailing the health and fitness benefits of regular participation in small-sided football games. Focusing on the effects of regular participation in football practice for children and youngsters states *“Football training has been demonstrated to enhance intermittent exercise performance, coordination and maximum oxygen uptake of children and teenagers. In addition, for obese children, regular participation in football training is at least as efficient in improving physical capacity, health-related fitness parameters and self-esteem as a standard exercise program”* (Krstrup et al., 2010). This and our findings suggest that sport and football can capitalise on its widespread appeal (James and Jenkin, 2013) for both positive physical and social outcomes.

The children’s comments within the focus groups offer a wholesale perception that support the researchers observations and that they are already physically active within and outside of school. One may argue that providing an intervention for already physical active children is worthwhile. However, the effectiveness of the intervention may be increased if more ‘at risk’ children were chosen to participate in the research

Focus Group B (week 16, n=10) aimed to understand the children’s perception’s of the EitC football oriented school-based community coaching intervention in health improvement. There perceptions of the community coaches and also aimed to further explore which part of the sessions the children enjoyed most, and what they would like to see included in future intervention.

Researcher: I want you to imagine that I am your best friend. I am coming to an Everton session for the first time. I am a little nervous because I don’t know what to expect. Can you tell me about Everton session, to let me know what to expect?

Lauren: Tell them you play load of good games and you get to know everyone names and the coach’s names and they warm up with you and play games.

Ruby: You could go up to them and say ‘Hello, my names Ruby and we play boss games and tail games.

Jason: You can tell them that you play football matches and you got to like score and save.

Researcher: Do you think they will enjoy that?

All the children nod.

Providing a fun and enjoyable coaching session is an important factor in any sport or physical activity participation intervention (Craig et al., 1996). The role the coach can play development is significant (Reilly, Williams and Richardson, 2003). This relationship is key, both Lyle (1999) and Jowett and Cockerill (2003) that building the relationship between the coach and child should be the foundations to any coaching. This impact is likely to become more impactful given the added weight of a 'Premier League Football' (given its widespread appeal) (Jenkins and James, 2013) arriving for community coach in a school within a deprived community. These findings suggest that the intervention EitC are delivering is both positive and encouraging. Despite the positive feedback from the children's focus groups the data consistently lacks any mention of positive health improvement.

Reflective stop off

Health promotion in the field

Having worked with many EitC coaches since joining the team in July 2006, I have been fortunate to meet some fantastic people and coaches. On the same hand I also think I joined a pivotal time in the organisation, whereby much of the EitC staff were part of the original football development era as opposed to the new community football paradigm we (EitC) had now entered – football for social change. This was a time when there was a lot of public money/funding for sport for social change projects and during a time as managerialism and professionalism in professional sport was beginning to emerge and have an impact within third sector sport organisations.

Out of the 64 EitC coaching sessions I observed as part of football oriented school based community coaching intervention I saw little (or no) health improvement message or agenda. Each week I hoped for mentions for physical activity, participation challenges, take home messages, health or lifestyle oriented football games...but every week I went deeper into the EitC organisation, developed a greater understanding of the coaches and realised this was never happening. Moreover, I began to question whether the coaches knew the potential health benefits of their work.

Whilst I watched some good EitC coaching sessions, delivered by some good coaches (and top people aside). I was left asking the question whether these were the right people to be delivering on a health improvement agenda.

With research suggesting that FitC programmes are both growing, in many cases overstretched and not keeping the pace with regards to new project developments and staff development (i.e., the emergence of skills shortages) (McGuire, 2008), it appears pertinent to consider how support existing EitC coaches and recruit new coaches. To ensure future interventions have the greatest possibility to make a genuine or real difference.

Whilst I had my own concerns regarding the content, flow and delivery of elements of the sessions these were not echoed by the children in the focus group. They tended to express glees of satisfaction with the 'sessions' and the coaches. Jonas (who had recently moved to England from Africa) explained *'I look forward to the sessions all weekend and all day. Paul (the coach) teaches us lots of skills and we play big matches'*. This was common throughout the schools, with this there always seemed to be a hype or energy, a sense of anticipation and excitement, whenever I (as part of EitC) or an EitC coach arrived at a school; from both the children and teachers. Despite the overwhelming approval of the majority of children there were some negative comments focused on the coach. Charlie (aged 9) said that *'If he (the coach) turned up on time we could get started straight away and have more time for a match'*. Titus (10) told me that the coach told him to *'shut up'*. Such comment's whilst not wholesale representation from all the children, do allude to negative memories of the intervention and the coach.

Despite the majority of children expressing their satisfaction towards the sessions, the expressions of displeasure and dissatisfaction will be explored further and discussed in the results and discussion Part B.

Write and draw

The following sections seek to provide examples supporting, developing and adding context to findings developed within the focus groups. The purpose of write and draw A (week 8, n=35) was to develop an understanding of where, with whom, and when the children took part in physical activity outside of school.

For the majority of children who took part in the write and draw initial inquiry 54% (n=19) had a place or facility to play whether it was the park or 'footy park' (Figure 3.6); with this 60% (n=21) of the children expressed that when they did play out it was with their friends. This figure rose when observing whether children play out with either their friends or family to 77% (n=27) (see Figure 3.7). Fifty four percent (n=19) of the children identified football as the activity that they predominantly took part in out of school (see Figure 3.6, 3.7, 3.8).

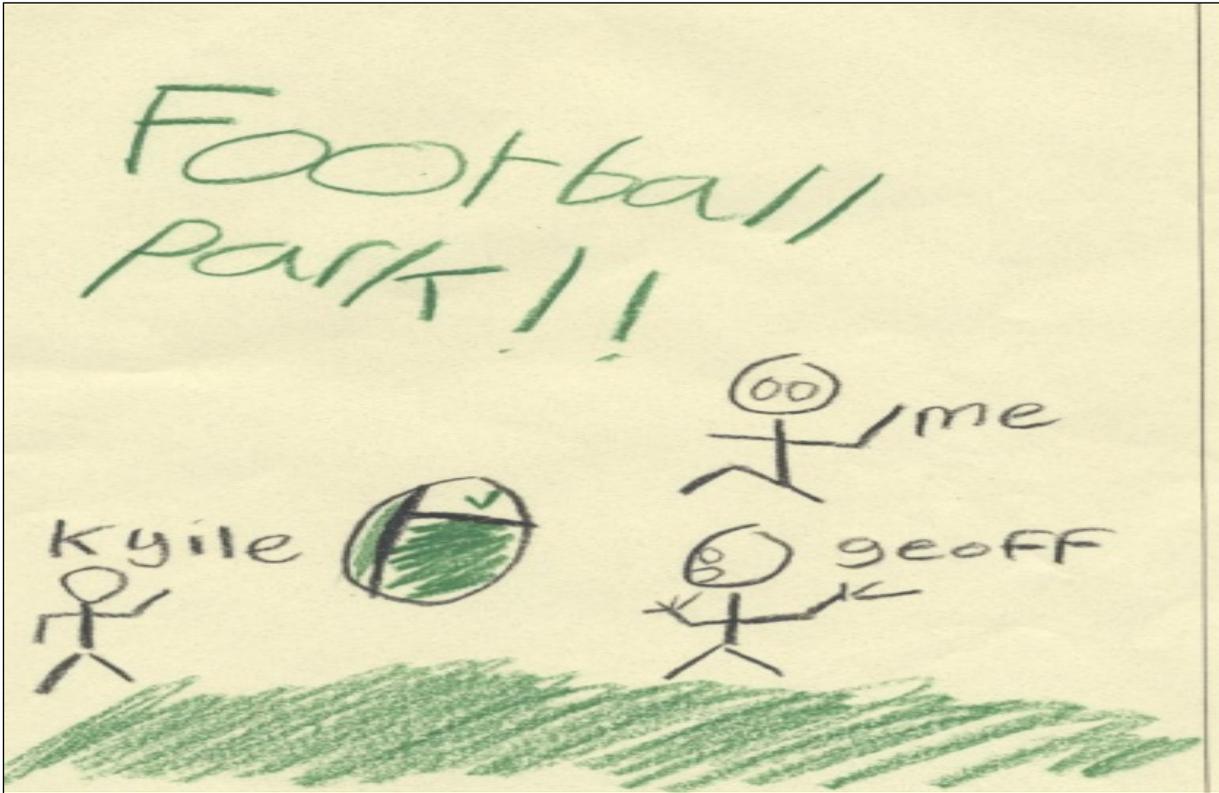


Figure 3.6 Write and draw A: an illustration detailing a child's place to play in the 'footy park'.

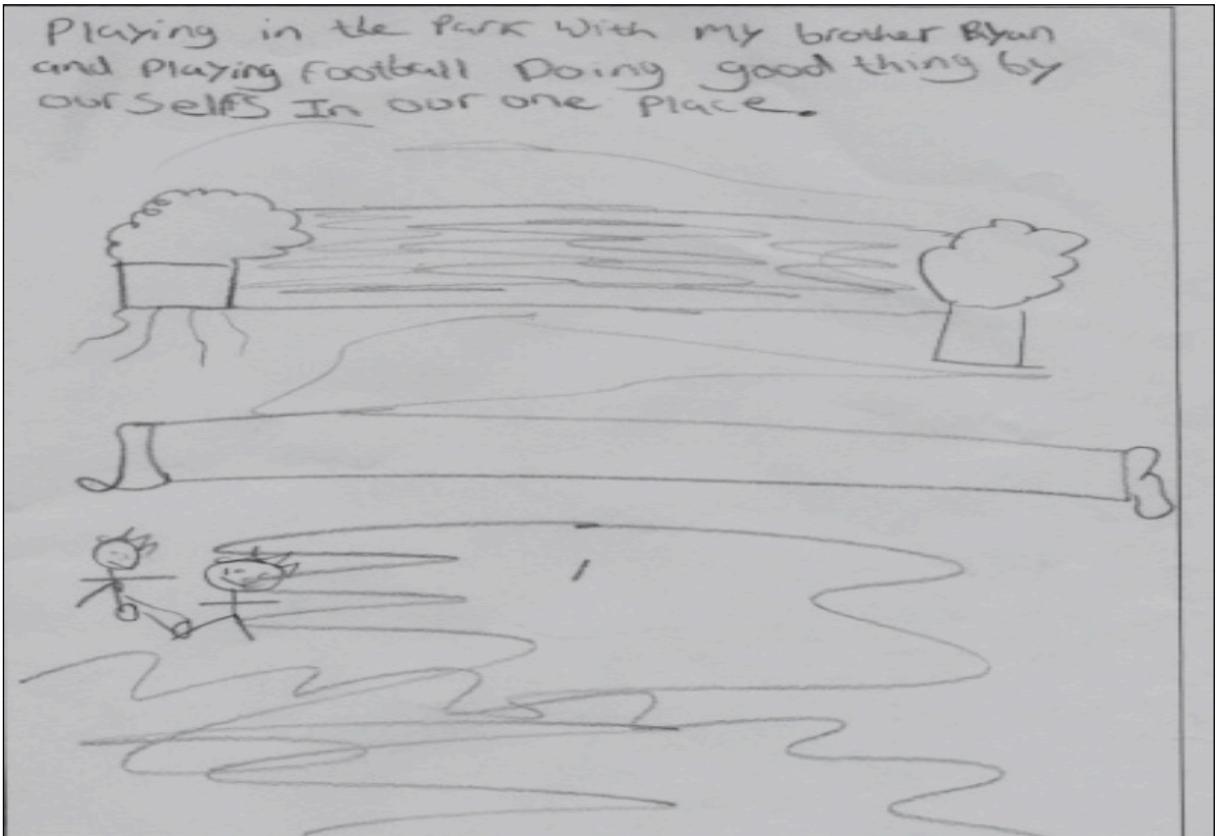


Figure 3.7 Write and draw A: an illustration detailing a child's place to play with family.

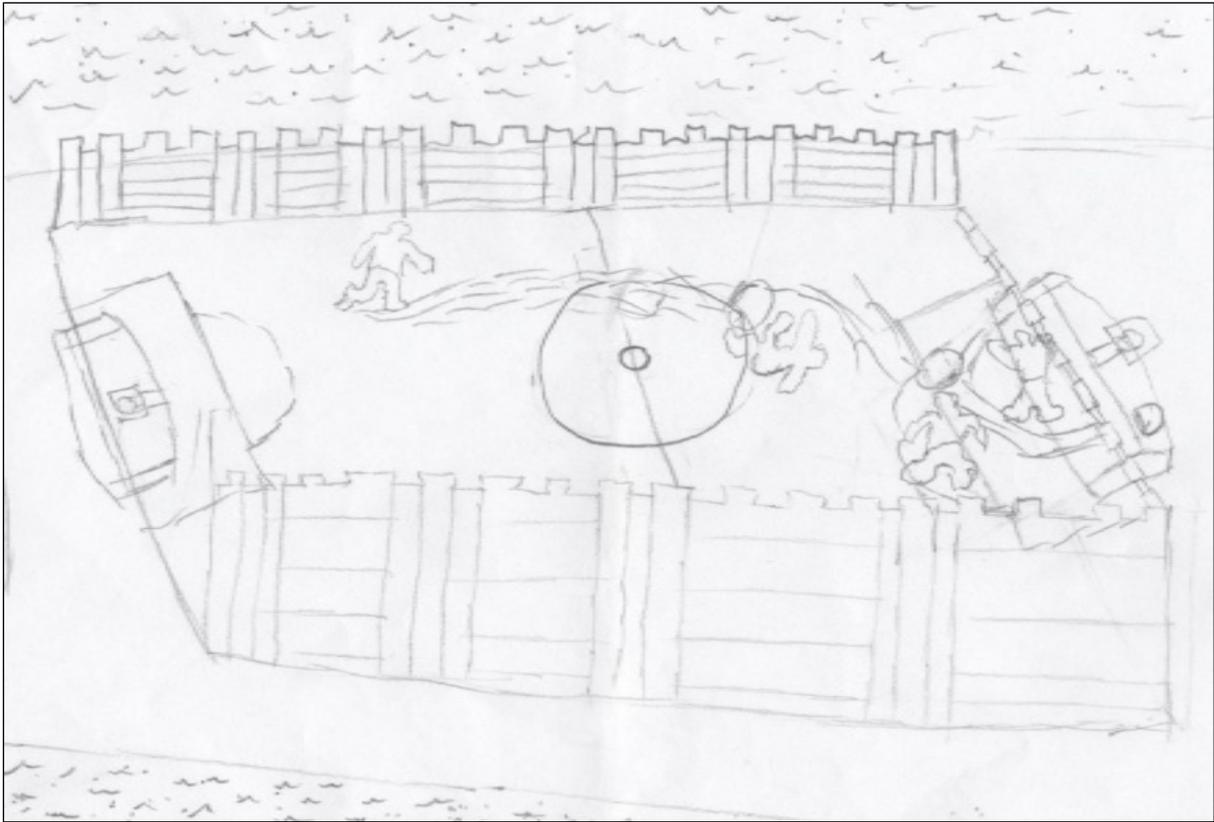


Figure 3.8 Write and draw A: an illustration detailing where children play football.

The data emerging from write and draw which supports that found within the focus groups suggested that almost all the children were physically active, mainly with friends and/or family and that the majority of these loved playing football (see Figure 3.8). It appeared that there were places to play (i.e., purpose built football pitches, parks and fields) or played regularly in the ‘street’.

Whilst many described having places to play and areas for football, however a number of children offered an insight to their playing environment which differed somewhat to this. Twenty five percent (n=9) of the children identified their playing area/space as being ‘*on the road*’, the street or perhaps having to cross a road to get to an appropriate play area (see Figure 3.9). Some of the drawings denoted typical terraced housing common in low socio-economic areas of Liverpool (see Figure 3.10). One child indicated within their image that they could not go out because of ‘slap-heads’, which she illustrated. Her drawings depicted common scenes from

public parks, street corners where youths ‘socialise’ in deprived areas, which were often perceived (perhaps rightly) as threatening or dangerous by the public (see Figure 3.11). The illustrations allude to concerns about the safety of their ‘play’ environment. Furthermore, many children described experiencing issues and dangers concerning playing in the street and traffic (Figure 3.9). It became apparent that the children’s ‘play’ space was a hostage to where they lived (in some cases), as children were apparently limited to playing in front of their house and within the eye-sight of their parents.

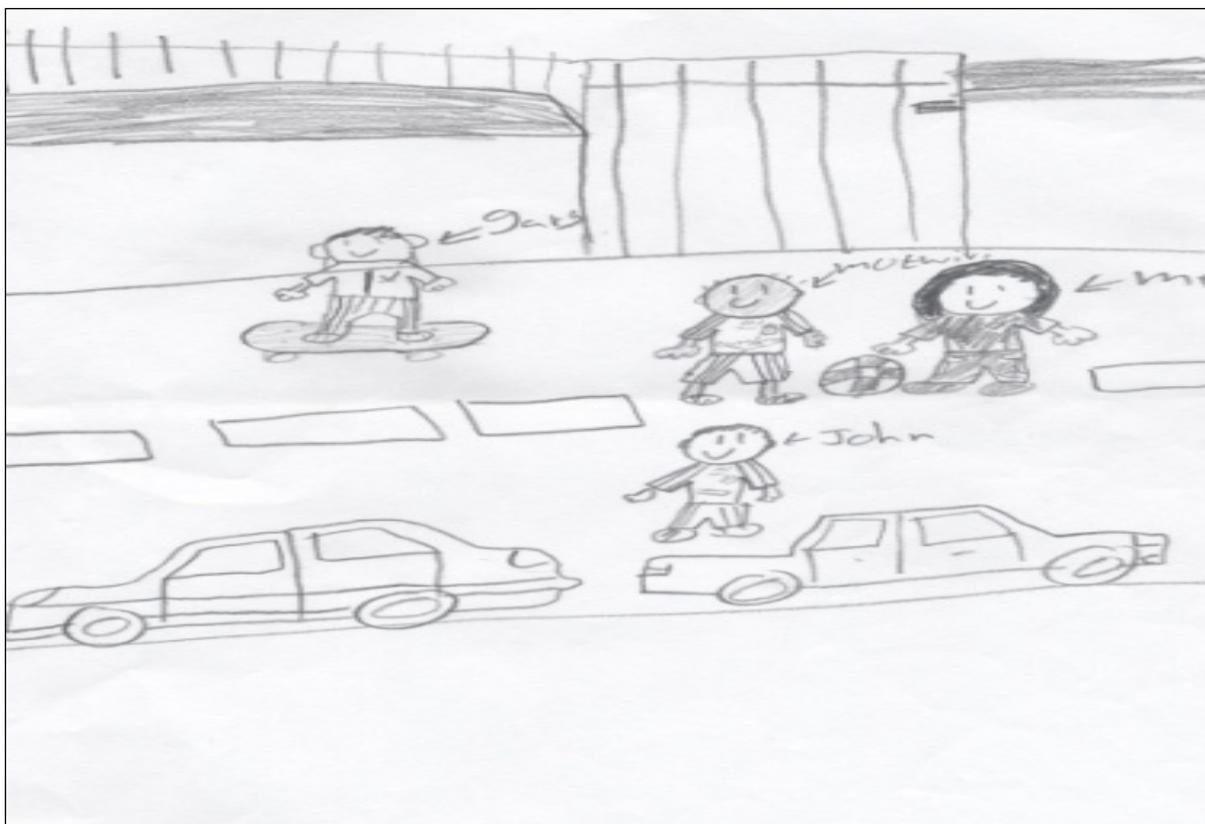


Figure 3.9 Write and draw A: an illustration detailing where children play ‘on the road’.

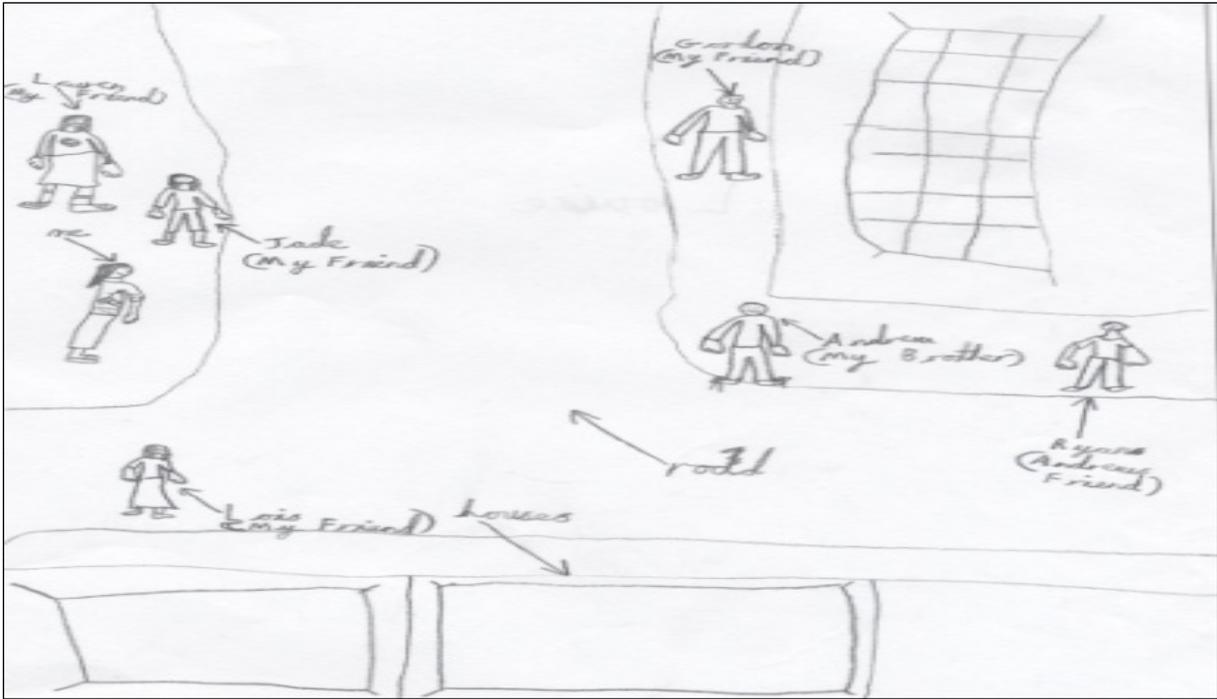


Figure 3.10 Write and draw A: an illustration detailing where children play ‘on the road’ and on a terraced housed residential street.

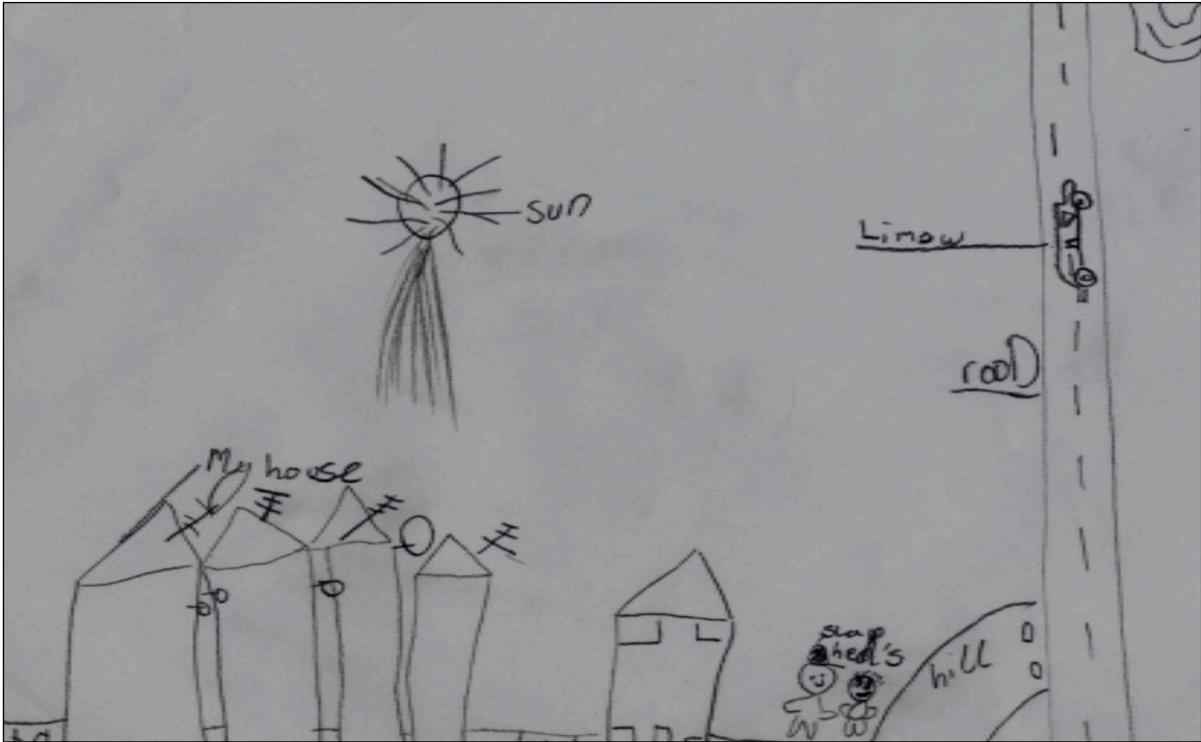


Figure 3.11 Write and draw A: an illustration detailing where children play highlighting ‘youths’ or ‘slap-heads’ socialising.

The purpose of write and draw B (week 16, n=36) again offered the children an option to express the feelings, perceptions and views relating to the intervention in different form. This process aimed to explore the children's emotions, perceptions and attitudes towards the EitC football oriented school based community coaching sessions. Sixty nine percent (n=25) of the children expressed positive experiences with the EitC sessions. This echoed that of findings expressed with the focus group data previously outlined. With this, a large proportion of the children's illustrations depicted playing football matches or the games they had experienced throughout the intervention (64%, n=23) (see Figure 3.12). Noting the games played (see Figures 3.12, 3.13, 3.14).

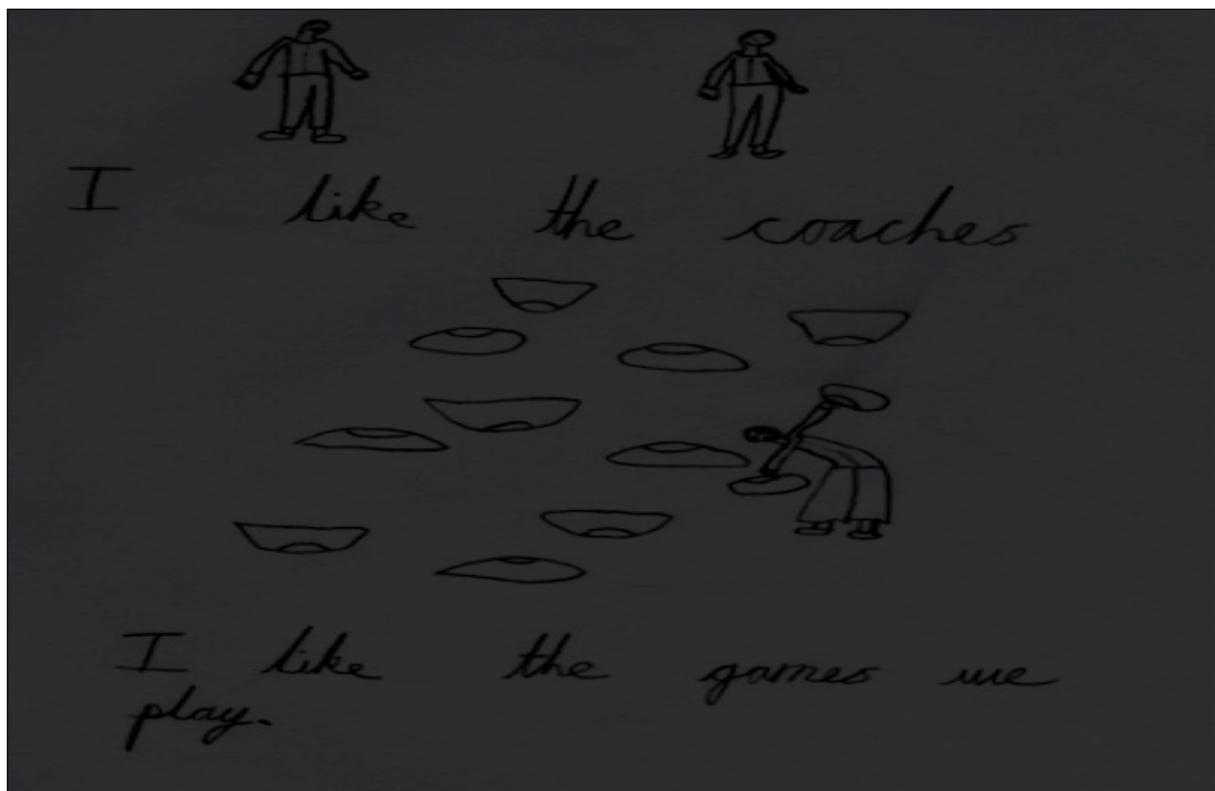


Figure 3.12 Write and draw B: an illustration detailing a child's feelings towards the coach.

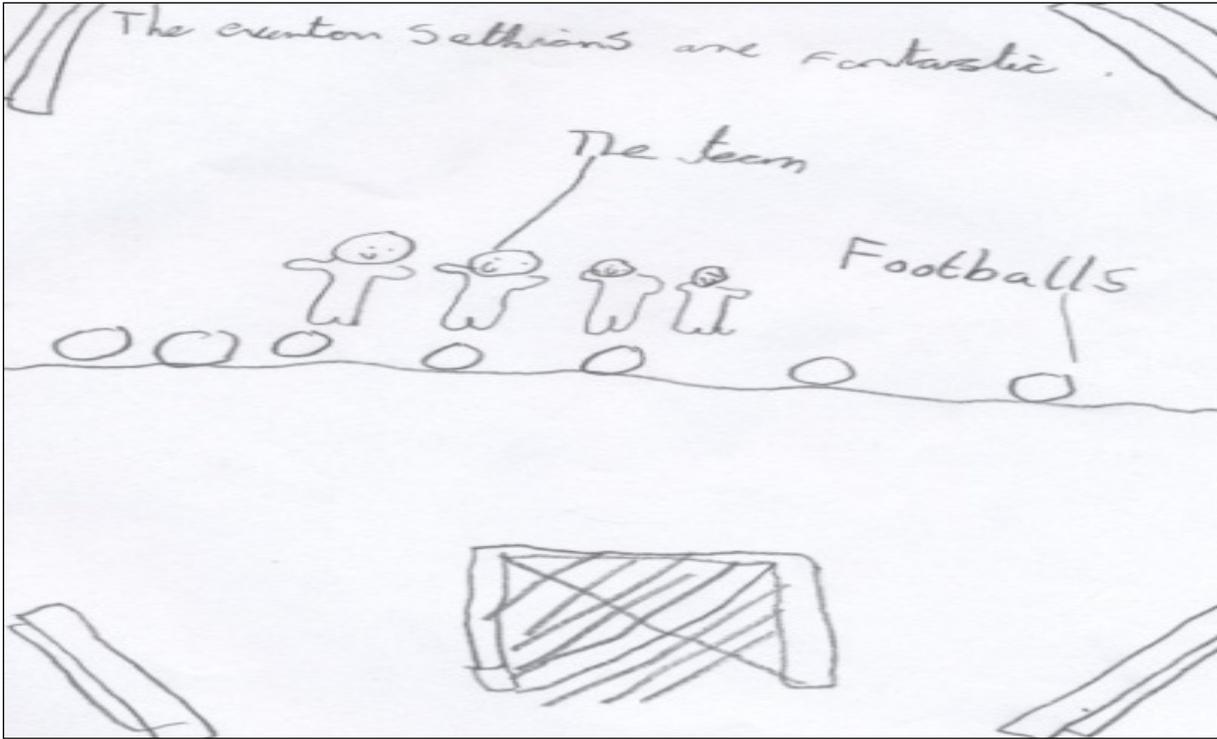


Figure 3.13 Write and draw B: an illustration detailing an EitC coaching session and a child's feelings towards the coaching sessions.

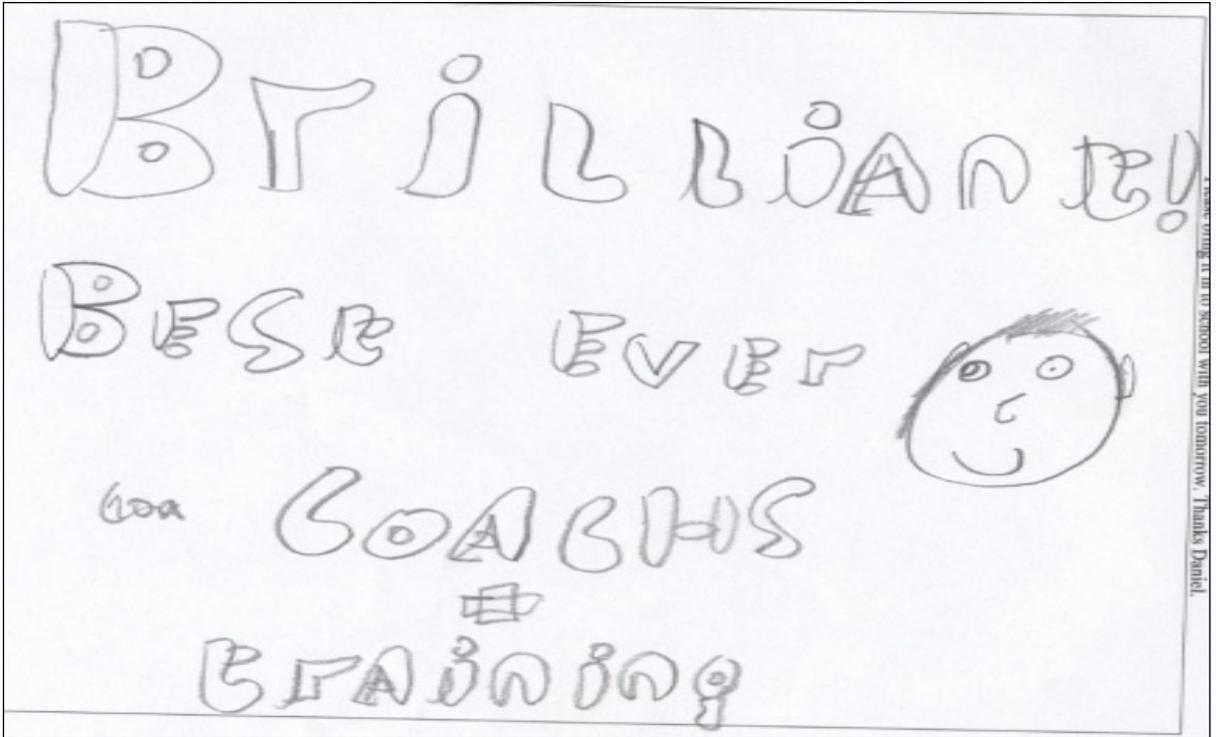


Figure 3.14 Write and draw B: an illustration detailing a child's feelings towards EitC coaches and coaching session.

The data collected within the write and draw process suggest that many of the children are active after school in sport, football and physical activity, is both positive and encouraging. Notably, the absence of sedentary behaviours (i.e., TV viewing or playing computer games) contrast findings by Saelens et al., (2003), which acknowledges sedentary behaviours are key parts of young people lives.

The data suggesting of playing with friends and family is notable (77%, n=27) in Figure 3.7. The family remains a key player in the socialisation and development of children in the formative years (Lau, Quadrel and Hartman, 1990) that influence belief systems, which has the potential to impact a child's preference, access and approach to physical activity (Wing, 2000). Moreover, there are a breadth of studies that highlight and support the importance of social support through both families and friends in enhancing children's participation in physical activity (Clarke, 1996; Booth, Baumen and Owen, 1997; Eyler et al., 1998; Conn, 1998), which has been outlined in an earlier section.

Whilst many children highlighted places to play outside of school that afforded bespoke playing facilities (i.e., football cage), for many their environment for play was on public roads or streets. Where children play has been documented as a key factor in regards to shaping their future health (Grotbergs', 1995). The images of streets, plenty of cars and perhaps the potential for an accident, the reality is that this may not influence participation in activity for children. Within the ecological model the environment is a key contributing factor that influences physical activity. Whilst one perceive such images may as unsafe for children to participate in regular physical activity. For many children 'the street' is the only option to play in a (relatively) safe environment, as it is where their parents can see them. Please see a focus groups extract below:

Researcher: Can you tell me about where you play, the places you play?

Mutwie: I play in the street or at me mates house.

Izzy: I have to play in the streets. The slap-heads are there, but it's the only place me mum can see me.

Carly: Me too. I can't leave the front of my house. My mum is like "You can only go where I can see you!"

Humber et al., (2006) highlighted that safe, accessible, low cost, well maintained facilities were key factors for low socio-economic-status young people's participation in physical activity. In many cases this is probably correct. For these kids, physical activity or play was the closest place to front step. Arguably safe in regards to parental supervision, but dangerous in terms of congested parking, traffic and facilities!

Fifty four percent (n=19) of the children identified football, as the activity that they predominantly took part in out of school, which support the widespread appeal and use of football (Jenkins and James, 2013). Given evidence surrounding the positive impacts of sport (in general) for an individual (Coalter, Allison and Taylor, 2000; Green, 2004; Tacon, 2005; Atherley, 2006; Kremer-Sadlik and Kim, 2007) it appears to support the use of football to engage children and young people in participation.

The data collected during the focus groups and write and draw sessions suggested that the children involved in the intervention were already active and enjoyed playing football and/or physical activity. The children were predominantly physically active with friends and/or with family. With this it appears that the majority of children have places to play (i.e., purpose built football pitches, parks and fields within close proximity of the children's home). However, the data raise concerns that reflect inappropriate and/or unsafe places to play for some children. With reference to the intervention itself the children's comments and responses suggested a real sense of overall satisfaction. The views of those who expressed negative memories is concerning and is further explored in the following results and discussion Part B.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

(Part B)

STUDY 1: Reconnaissance Phase

Chapter 3 Study 1 Aims:

Aim 1: Reconnaissance Phase: Explore the effectiveness of a football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the broader working practice within EitC.

Objective 1: Reconnaissance Phase:

- I. Conduct a multi-method intervention evaluation of EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.
- II. Explore working practice and factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.**

3.8 Results and discussion (Part B)

The previous section sought to progress through the research methods outlined exploring the effectiveness of EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement. Building upon these conclusions and seeking to explore issues raised within the results and discussion Part A in further detail. The following section will begin to consider the working practice and factors contribute to the effectiveness of a football oriented school based community coaching intervention within EitC.

The following results and discussion section offers, what the authors perceive to be, the relevant issues emerging from the expansive data collected that help address other factors contributing to the success of the intervention. The data detailed in Part A of the results and discussions suggests that the intervention was unable to influence positive health improvement changes in the children involved, but was able to maintain activity in already active participants. The fun and enjoyable nature of the intervention and the hype and excitement within the children, teachers and schools involved in the programme seemed to be an important aspect of keeping the children engaged/participating in activity. Despite the overwhelming approval of the majority of children there were some negative comments focused on the coach within the focus groups

Alan (aged 11): ... she (the coach) just used to shout and used to send you out for ...

Jen (aged 10): For nothing

Alan: Yes, for nothing

Jen: For literally nothing. She would blame one person and send them out, when it was all of us.

Researcher: Why would you get sent out?

Jen: If someone was messing she would pick out someone else

Researcher: So how could you have stopped all that?

Alan: Staying away from people?

Jess: But she did it every week. We would just get bored and mess about

Adam (aged 11): I got bored because we kept doing the same things (warm ups) each week.

Tom (aged 11): We warmed up sometimes for half an hour

Whilst such comments are not a wholesale representation from all of the children, they do allude to possible negative memories of the intervention and specifically the coach. It is apparent that ineffective working practices of some EitC coaches throughout the intervention (and on specific occasions) the potential effectiveness of this intervention has been limited.

These ineffective working practices appeared within the delivery of the intervention surrounding the role of ‘the coach’ and their respective coaching practice. The following discussion explores the role of the EitC coach, alluding to coaching practice, coach recruitment, aspirations and skill base. In order to maximize the potential impact or effectiveness of health improvement work within a FitC programmes, it appeared that a number of working practices must be addressed to tackle some of the observed issues present within the intervention.

Reflective stop off

Premier League quality?

Since my interview for this position, meeting with the chief operating officer at Goodison (the home of Everton Football Club) and arriving at my first EitC Soccer School to put on my new Everton training kit (proving my worth as a coach was part of ‘getting into’ EitC) I would probably say I was in a state of shock and awe. Everton was (and is) my club, from my first game at the age of two through to taking my kids the game now. I didn’t think I would lose the rose tinted spectacles all Everton fans in my place would don...

One thing that was clear, was that these kids loved football. They had the same glossed over look as we (the coaches) arrived, looking like we were turning up for first team training, kitted out and with our bag of balls. Right, the kids were wearing their Liverpool, Everton, Barcelona shirts and some just in their school uniform, but they all felt it. This was *it* for them – it was their Goodison, on the windswept, overgrown, yet muddy pitch next to the Dock Road in Liverpool. It didn’t matter that the cars drowned out the voice of the coach.

Having worked across community coaching in my time, I felt as if I had seen the good, the bad and the ugly, but I guess I wasn’t prepared (and certainly didn’t expect) to see what I did at Everton Football Club. Let’s not be shy – this is the Premier League – the Premier League of community engagement - why not expect something nothing short of a quality experience for all.

The coach and coaching practice

It was evident that (generally) the children did not want to engage in long sessions that were focused on improving technical skills or tactical play. Overly prescriptive approaches to coaching have been reported as a factor in reducing participation (Dwyer et al., 2006). In this regard, I was able to empathize with the children’s frustrations as throughout the intervention I witnessed a number of situations where the coaches attempted to deliver routine or traditional (performance

oriented) football drills. In one particular instance within a session at Kingsway Primary School frustrations (between the coach and children) became evident:

Today Alan (the coach) arrived 5 min before the session was due to start. I had arrived early today as usual.

I stood to the side of the session – casually leaning against a metal railing, watching the scene unfold. Alan started, as he usually does with warm up drills and dynamic stretches. I can't help, but remember my days coaching ... it all looks very professional. Too professional perhaps. Professional, but not in a 'fun' way. As I watched the children within the coned area, there were a few laughs and bits of banter '*Aaron you run like a giraffe!*' gets some giggles, but some of them look a bit tired – not the physical 'puffed out' tried, but bored. Some are walking around, strolling almost, shoulders down, a bit lack-lustre. After a slow start and 10 min into the warm up, my concerns were confirmed as murmurings of 'I'm tired' and 'Can we play yet?' littered the air. To be fair to the kids, I was pretty bored myself. We were 5 weeks into the programme and this warm up was virtually the same as every other one that either Alan or Jack (another community coach) who shared the session with Alan throughout the intervention, had delivered. Following the warm up, the session flowed into some basic passing moves between the children. This moved into a complex passing drill involving the whole group of children working together. We've moved from boring to complex in one fell swoop! This was an intricate drill, one that some similar aged academy players would struggle with, never mind the group we have here. The children really struggled and became frustrated and impatient. Mistake after mistake, missed pass after missed pass. Stop, start, stop start...

I couldn't help wonder why Alan persisted. I kept thinking, but I was powerless. I can feel my head, screaming 'change the drill!!! Why don't you just change the drill? I'm shouting'. He can't hear. It's not my job to intervene. Can't you see the children are frustrated? Just change the drill!

Alan (and other coaches involved in the intervention) did not (formally or officially) plan any sessions. My understanding was that Alan plans all his sessions 'in his head'...or at least I hoped. Given the difficulty that the children were having with the task, it would appear sensible/appropriate (to any informed coach) to adapt or change the session to a more suitable practice or game equivalent and relevant to the ability of the group (Salmela, 1995). What followed developed into something nothing short of a spectacle:

Undeterred, Alan continued to persevere with the drill, 'Come on, surely you can do this?' The children were becoming clearly frustrated (with some looking to me with desperate expressions). Alan then turned to me. With subtle manoeuvring I retreated back to my 'leaning' role, busying myself away from the session. 'If they can't do this simple task they will never make it (as a professional)'. With a slight wince, I tried to hide my disbelief at Alan's comment. Not only could the children hear the comment, but it also confirmed that Alan was approaching the sessions with a performance oriented lens. Alan, having received a neutral dismissal of his remark from me turned to the children, 'We're not stopping this (drill) until you do it!' The children themselves, who already appeared de-motivated and frustrated, responded in unison, 'We just want to play!' Further calls for a match or game continued. The session finally came to a painful end, with Alan spluttering to me 'I have washed my hands with them (the children). I've had enough'. With that he collected the balls in and busied himself packing the balls away. What's happening I thought? 'Are they having a match?' I asked, which was met with a curt reply 'No'. Alan was actually ending the session, no debrief, no feedback, not even a goodbye! These kids didn't deserve this. I spoke to them and said we, (yes the preverbal we) would see them next week. The kids weren't impressed! As Alan sloped off towards the car, I felt a huge sense of disappointment. Disappointment shared with the kids.

Alan is a community coach with a number of years of experience working with young people in a range of roles. Alan has accrued his 'badges' (required by the English Football Association and

Football in general to coach children) through his role within the EitC. There are concerns here that although Alan has appropriate accreditation, it would appear that he is less able to translate his skill set to fulfil and meet the needs and requirements of a community-oriented (i.e. predominantly recreational) session. In effect, the FA's accreditation programme does not equip the 'community coach' with a full skill set to work across such complex situations such as this (Borrie and Knowles, 2003). In this sense, whilst Alan was able to demonstrate high-level technical instruction, he failed to give feedback (positive), reinforcement and supportive behaviour, which has been associated with higher player perceptions of competence, enjoyment, self-esteem and self-confidence (Smoll and Smith 1993). Such inadequacies suggest that Alan is failing in his attempt to encourage participation and/or the promotion of physical activity (i.e. whether these children are future performers or not). His coaching practice fails to embrace a physical activity remit and was detrimental to the self-worth that these kids may have had. Despite this, when Alan was asked about what he thought the sessions were all about, he replied: *"Enjoyment, it's the taking part that we (EitC) try to look at; we don't want to go into the schools and spot the next Stephen Gerard or Tim Cahill. We want to look to get everybody involved, so the enjoyment is the main part. If they are enjoying it you've obviously achieved what you have gone in there to do"*.

Whilst Alan (and all coaches within their interviews) highlighted fun as being a key factor in their coaching sessions, it appears he cannot actually deliver on this agenda if the children he is coaching are not skilled. Somewhere between Alan becoming a regular 'community coach', completing his coaching qualifications and joining the EitC, he has developed some negative working practices and/or was responding to unfamiliar circumstances. In this sense, his interpretation of a 'fun and enjoyable' focused session would typically involve a pass and move drill. Importantly, it has been highlighted that situational factors such as national (the Football Association) and organizational culture (of EitC) may have played an influence on the behaviour of the coach (Côté et al., 1993).

Recruiting the right person for the job

To become employed as a coach within EitC you must possess a UEFA B, or at least a Football Association Level 2, coaching qualification. On appointment, newly recruited staff undertake an informal induction within EitC. Such an induction includes spending time observing an established coach. Whilst such an approach can be viewed as good practice, it can also expose new recruits to poor practice. In this regard, if new recruits shadow a coach that is not ‘on message’ or not delivering to a high quality then these new coaches can be organizationally socialized into poor practice (Potrac et al., 2002). It appeared that new coaches delivered what they had observed and learnt from more experienced coaches, *‘You watch and speak to other coaches for a while, but then you just deliver the sessions. It’s not hard, just basic football sessions’* (Alan). Educational literature relating to newly recruited teachers, like coaches suggest that new employees endeavour to ‘fit in’ to an organization, as much as learn to ‘coach’ (Zeichner and Gore, 1990). For example Alan had been through this process and may have inherited elements of poor practice from existing (more experienced) coaching staff. Similarly, early career coaches (similar to teachers) may be ill-equipped to deal with the problems and difficulties (i.e. organizational, cultural and practice) that they face, as they encounter the pressures to conform (Kuzmic, 1994). Therefore, new coaches are likely to inherit the (in some cases entrenched) practices of the existing coaching staff. This negative socialization appears evident in Alan’s case and the following extract outlines the discrete introductory experiences of two other community coaches:

Josh: when you join you shadow a more senior coach and so for the first maybe three or four weeks you won’t actually have to take a session but just watch and pick up ideas on and get a feel for how the sessions run and what type of children you are mainly dealing with

Pete: I didn’t have any experience of working in schools when I started. During my enrolment I would have liked to have had some time to shadow a coach but because when I joined there weren’t many coaches they didn’t really have the resources for me to be shadowing another coach. I went straight into it

If an organization aspires to effective and efficient working practices then the initial attempt at providing a mentor (to shadow/support) newly appointed coaches is laudable. However, given that there were concerns expressed over the existing practices of (some) of the coaches, it is likely that elements of this poor practice will permeate newly appointed staff. In this sense, new recruits are highly likely to become organizationally socialized through aspects of poor practice. This situation is further compounded by the fact that the enrolment process does not appear to encourage or promote change or creativity in practice. Knowles et al., (2001) state the importance of reflective practice on coach development and progressive positive change. It would appear that (some) of the practices adopted here are more likely to encourage conformity and social alignment with workplace norms. Moreover, it appeared that the aspirations of the coach in relation to coaching orientation (i.e. participation or performance) appeared to impact the fluency of coaching practice and may be a direct product of a the requirement to hold an Football Association Level 2 or UEFA B qualification. Such qualifications tend to be more aligned with academy (performance) rather than community (participation) coaching practice.

Community or academy: where do you want to be?

When exploring the various research data collected from the coaches (n = 6), the three coaches who aspired to stay working within the EitC; based on my personal observations and comments from the children, they delivered the most fluent sessions, compared to those who aspired to work in professional football academies or centres of excellences. It was no surprise when it emerged that Alan's aspirations lay beyond the community coaching environment and the FitC programme, *I will probably move on from the community, and move to something of a higher level of coaching*'. All six coaches aspired to 'up-skill' their coaching qualifications, despite stating that they felt that their core work did not need this additional training. It appeared that coaches who were typically used to coaching competent (i.e. football competent) children, were now faced with children

whom were neither particularly skilful nor competent. Subsequently, the coaches experienced some behavioural problems with the children within the intervention. During these challenging situations, some coaches were ill-equipped to neither deal with nor attribute a specific cause to the behaviour. Jason was a young coach, who worked on both an elite adult level and within the community interventions. However, before joining the EitC he had no prior experience of school-based coaching. Jason was subsequently asked (within the interviews) whether he found any problems with the sessions/programme, to which he responded: *“I don’t think there have been any sort of massive problems that stick out, but then that really depends on what your definition of a problem is. We have had some sessions that have broken down because of the kids behaviour, but that happens to an extent in almost any and every session, but in terms of the structure and delivery of the programme– no I wouldn’t say there have been any major problems”*.

The results show that the coach and their respective skills and ability influence both the fluency of their session and the rapport they develop with the children. These findings are similar to those that suggest that expert coaches are better able to make more effective decisions regarding appropriate behaviour and subsequent actions in any given situation (Lyle, 1999). The more experienced EitC coaches who wanted to continue with the organisation developed their skill set and expertise around their role, rather than remain focused on a performance agenda. They would be better able to make more informed decisions in line with Lyle (1999) findings.

3.9. Conclusions and future research

The purpose of this study was to explore the working practice and the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a football oriented school based coaching intervention delivered by EitC. The collective focus group data, write and draw illustrations, comments from the children and further contextual information from the researcher, for the children and teachers this coaching intervention provided excitement, enjoyment and fun for (the majority of) those involved (Craig

et al., 1996). In particular, the intervention has provided an opportunity for the majority of already active children to engage in further (or replacement) football-based physical activity opportunities. Whilst this positive experience is highly laudable, it appears that this may be due to excitement rather than due to the reality of the experience. The deficiencies (or gaps) in the coaches' skill base, and subsequent inappropriate working practices, the potential effectiveness of this intervention has been limited to 'keeping active children active, through fun and enjoyable sessions'. To maximise the potential impact or effectiveness of a football oriented school based coaching intervention being delivered with EitC, it appears a number of working practices must be addressed.

To effectively address and target healthful behaviour, the focus of such interventions i.e. to promote health improvement, needs to embrace and include more 'at risk' or perhaps 'in need' populations, i.e. those not engaged in physical activity and/or are overweight or obese. Further to this, concerns over poor coaching practice, although isolated and coach dependent, must be challenged and tackled. The recruitment process appears to be contributing factor to this issue. Therefore, EitC must make sure the right people with the right skills are employed (i.e. including the coaches' skill base, qualifications and experience across populations) to ensure that EitC interventions can attend to the increasingly complex social and health agendas that they are being asked to tackle. Moreover, EitC programmes must provide newly recruited (and existing) coaches with relevant and specialised training opportunities to 'skill up', as part of a commitment to relevant continued professional development (CPD). Such an up-skilling process, through (say) coordinated CPD opportunities will enable effective delivery across projects and agendas and not necessarily be reliant on the Football Association's incremental levels of (performance-based) coaching qualifications and/or coaching licences. The use of reflective practice with regards to coach development may support the development of positive change and tackle the presence negative organisational socialisation.

In light of these findings, EitC appear to possess a number of potentially positive factors that may provide a background for such interventions to deliver positive results in community-based football projects. However, it is apparent that EitC may require a number of positive organisational changes. To realise the potential, they have to develop and utilise effective working practices that specifically relate to the individuals who are involved in the direct delivery of the programmes.

The extensive reconnaissance phase has provided a rich amount of data and contextual insight into the realities of EitC an organisation delivering at the frontline of health improvement. The researcher was provided the context and time to imbed and immerse within the fabric of the organisation and operate under the radar as a practitioner-cum-researcher. At this point as we look ahead to future research it is worth considering our current location within the action research process. Consistent with the notions of action research espoused by Carr and Kemmis (1986) action research “...seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions of issues of pressing concern to people...” (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; p1).

Chapter Four

Aim 2: Action Planning: In collaboration with senior management with EitC reflect on the effectiveness of the results from the reconnaissance phase with a view to creating meaningful and positive actions (or ways forward) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.

Objective 2: Action Planning:

- I. To develop a dissemination event for senior management within EitC to feedback findings from the reconnaissance phase and generate meaningful ways forward (or actions) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.
- II. To collate and distribute potential actions before hosting an action meeting to discuss and confirm plausible ways forward.

4.0. Study 2 Part I: Aims and methodology: action planning

The aim of this phase of the research is to explore the emerging themes from the reconnaissance phase with regards to the effectiveness of the EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the working practices evident within EitC coaching staff.

4.1. Introduction

Study 1 focused on both the effectiveness of the intervention and the working practices of those individuals (i.e., coaches) operating within the intervention, alongside exploring their individual working environment (i.e., EitC). The role of the EitC coach appeared significant in contributing to the fluency of coaching sessions and in turn the overall effectiveness of the intervention.

It appears that, from the extensive data collected during Study 1 (i.e., the reconnaissance phase), the intervention had provided an opportunity for the majority of already active children to engage in further physical activity opportunities. Whilst this positive experience is highly laudable, it appears that due to the deficiencies (or gaps) in the coaches' skill base, and subsequent inappropriate working practices, the potential effectiveness of this intervention was limited to 'keeping active children active, through fun and enjoyable sessions'. In order to maximise the potential impact or effectiveness of a football oriented school based coaching intervention being delivered with EitC, it would seem appropriate to address the existing working practices. The key areas of working practice that were highlighted include targeting the focus of such interventions (i.e. to promote health improvement) embracing and including more 'at risk' or perhaps 'in need' populations (i.e. those not engaged in physical activity and/or are overweight or obese). Further to this, Study 1 revealed some underlying concerns with respect to poor coaching practice (although isolated and coach dependent) which require further examination. The recruitment process for community coaching staff (including candidate

selection and subsequent induction) was cited as a contributory factor to this issue. Moreover, the research suggested that EitC should consider providing newly recruited (and existing) coaches with relevant and specialised training opportunities to ‘skill up’, as part of a commitment to relevant continued professional development (CPD). In summary, EitC appeared to offer potential positive factors (i.e., fun and enjoyable sessions through football), however the organisation could adopt a range of positive changes that could enhance the effectiveness of the coaching programme(s), specifically enhancing the working practice of those individuals (coaches) involved in direct delivery of interventions.

Due to the working practices of the EitC coaches, which were likely a product of the culture and environment set strategically by management within the organisation it was appropriate to share and explore the findings from Study 1 with senior management, to allow senior management to comment on their own experiences, perspectives and realities within a group situation. Specifically, Study 2 seeks to share findings and promote dialogue between senior management on the emergent issues from Study 1 with a view to engaging in some form of positive change. Study 2 was undertaken in two parts. Part I encouraged shared reflection and potential mechanisms via a dissemination event for senior management within EitC to feedback findings from the reconnaissance phase and generate meaningful ways forward (or actions) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation. Part II sought for senior management target explicit change strategies within an action meeting to confirm plausible ways forward consistent with action research methodology.

4.2. Rationale, design and focus group methodology

Focus groups were originally used with communication studies to explore the effects of film and television, prior to becoming an important tool in public health (Basch, 1987; Kitzinger, 1993), to examine peoples’ experience of disease and the health service (Brown, Lent and Sas, 1993;

Denning and Verschelden, 1993). The focus group is aimed to encourage people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one-to-one interviews. Group discussion is particularly useful when the interviewer wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities. When run effectively, focus group participants work alongside the researcher, taking the research in new and often unexpected directions (Kitzinger, 1995). This is particularly relevant and important for collaborative action research.

Championed as a method for informing the planning of research, or to provide summative and/or formative evaluation of research, the focus group is a versatile data collection technique (Basch, 1987). The focus group has been highlighted as a method to yield more and richer information than individual interviews (Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981) and often utilised once considerable research has already been undertaken. The stimulating and flexible nature of focus groups allows for dialogue to develop and emerge with subsequent opportunities for intensive exploration of opinions, feelings, attitudes and behaviours (Murphy et al., 1992). Basch (1987) noted that ascertaining the participant's perspectives of research (whilst infrequent) can offer a unique and relevant viewpoint to clarify meaning, implications and context surrounding research findings.

In this present study, the focus group was used to present some of the findings from Study 1 (i.e., the reconnaissance phase) to the participants (i.e., senior management) and collaborators in the research in order to feedback to senior management within EitC the findings from the reconnaissance phase and generate meaningful ways forward (or actions) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation before collating and confirming plausible ways forward within an action meeting. Whilst there were only 2 participants from EitC present within the focus group and this is may be described more of a group interview, it is presented in the focus group format, as the focus group purpose, development, structure offered the most appropriate and

relevant methodology to meet the requirements of the study. Throughout the thesis this will approach will be referred to as a focus group.

The focus group sought to encourage senior management to engage in reflection and open dialogue, offering interpretations and/or explanations. Throughout the focus group process senior management was encouraged to consider potential mechanisms to move forward and enhance working practice pertaining to the emergent issues highlighted and discussed.

Familiarisation between the researcher and senior management had previously been developed as the researcher had been appointed in June 2006. During the reconnaissance phase (Study 1) the researcher had many meetings and informal interactions with senior management within EitC. The researcher was aware of concerns with regards to ‘participant behaviour adjustment’, whereby the focus group participants adjust their behaviour in relation to the impression of others, their own personal needs and history (Carey and Smith, 1994). However, much was done to reduce this limitation. Given the nature of collaborative action research and the importance of sharing findings and providing feedback it is acknowledged that some apprehension may have been experienced by senior management. Essentially, the focus group would be providing insight into the strengths and weakness of *their* intervention and organisation.

The focus group had a very specific purpose, which was to share findings, reflect and propose mechanisms to move forward. Therefore, the design, construction, execution and analysis required a thorough approach. The focus group was designed with respect to Basch’s (1987; p418) phenomenological approach (see Table 4.1), which concerned the “...everyday knowledge from the shared perception of the particular respondent subgroups.” Whilst not attempting to adopt a phenomenological approach, the philosophical sentiments espoused by Basch’s (1987) set a solid foundation for developing this focus group.

Table 4.1. A phenomenological approach to focus groups (adapted from Basch, 1987; p419-421).

Primary Use	To see the World as respondents...or as opinion leaders see it
1. Nature and extent of group interaction and interaction between moderator and group mentors	A high level of group interaction is desirable; intent is to determine degree of intersubjectivity regarding various topics, thus examining the ways in which group members relate to each other provides insights about the extent to which their experiences are shared; moderator is actively involved in discourse in an attempt to affiliate with the group so he can truly see the World from their (our) perspective.
2. Requirement that groups be homogenous with respect to psychological, social and demographic characteristics	Homogeneity is important since intersubjectivity is unlikely to emerge if group members are dissimilar. Homogeneity with respect to some factors, such as ability level and social status, may promote higher levels of group interactions.
3. Importance of the moderator's interviewing technique	Highly ritualised interviewing technique does not seem appropriate; though maintaining rapport with respondents and a comfortable atmosphere is important.
4. Expertise required by the moderator	Ability to identify with group members is important; knowledge and skills of group dynamics are important.
5. Rationale for analysis and reporting results	Emphasis is placed on extensive verbatim quotes from group members. Objective is to communicate respondents' perspective in their own words.

4.3. Construction of the focus group schedule

The focus groups offered a meaningful method to enable the senior management at EitC explore, share, clarify, query and develop the findings from Study 1 (see Appendix 1 for guidance on the organisational structure of EitC). Prior to the meeting the dominant themes that emerged from Study 1 were prepared for peer triangulation through meetings between the research and two experienced colleagues. These meetings also contributed to translating the findings from Study 1 into an organised and readily understandable format. A PowerPoint presentation was developed, including four specific slides formulated to guide and facilitate discussion.

These slides highlighted a number of factors that limited the effectiveness of the intervention. In many cases, it appeared the *operational* practice or working practice of the EitC coaches impacted and (findings suggest) limited the effectiveness of the intervention. Key components of Study 1 included; the *school*, the *children*, and the *coach*, all of which featured as a focus for each of the four slides. The working practice evident with the EitC coaches appeared to stem from *strategic* working practices in place within the context, environment and culture of EitC. For each of the key parts of the intervention the slides sought examine notions of *ideal* practice and present *actual* practice, whilst alluding to the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. The focus group then sought to guide senior management towards exploring the rationale (i.e., behavioural, environmental, cultural) behind their current working practice and to explore and identify potential mechanisms to enhance their own (and others’) working practice. The content and flow of the focus group is outlined in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Content and flow of the focus group.

Introduction
Purpose of focus group, importance of an inclusive contribution, confidentiality. Emphasis on personal and professional experiences of working practice. Working towards identifying mechanisms to move forward. (10 minutes)
Slide 1
<u>Background and Responsibilities: The School</u>
Exploration of the school, the relationship between the school and EitC, school socio-economic status, the positive and negative experiences, actual vs ideal, operational and strategic working practices. Identify ways forward. (20 minutes)
Slide 2
<u>Background & Physical Activity Pattern</u>
Exploration of the children’s physical activity and behaviour. Positive and negative experiences, actual vs ideal, operational and strategic working practices. Identify way forward. (20 minutes)
Slide 3
<u>Coach Characteristics</u>
Exploration of the participants’ personal perspective of the ideal characteristics of a community coach, in order of importance. (5 minutes)
Slide 4
<u>Roles and Responsibilities: The Coach</u>
Exploration of the coach, working practice within the intervention and with EitC. Positive and negative experiences, actual vs ideal, operational and strategic working practices. Identify way forward. (35 minutes)
Response and Summary
To enable clarification of discussion and responses. (10 minutes)

4.4 Logistics of the focus group

The two participants were informed of the focus group and invited to attend The Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences, Liverpool John Moores University on 16 July 2007 in the boardroom. Thought was given to the location and setting to ensure a setting was chosen to allow freedom of expression and reduce inhibitions with the participants as espoused by (Murphy et al., 1992, p37). The boardroom within the Henry Cotton Building was both local and familiar to the participants, offered a location outside of the 'Club' that was both a comfortable and professional environment.

The boardroom was booked for the day and prepared to accommodate the participants. Tea, coffee, juice, water and biscuits were provided throughout the focus group. The participants sat on either side of a two-metre square table with the researcher on an opposite side. At the head of the table was free space for the projector screen. Each PowerPoint slide was projected onto the screen in full view of all participants. A senior colleague, experienced in both action research and focus groups sat with the researcher and acted as rapporteur (i.e., note taker) throughout the focus group. This process freed the researcher to focus on developing the group discussion and interaction (Frey and Fontana, 1995). The researcher also recorded the focus group on a Dictaphone to support the analysis.

4.5 The role of the researcher

Participants involved in focus groups should not worry or feel that they are being judged by the researcher or facilitator (or coach) (Marquardt et al., 2009). The facilitator must have a familiarity, which has been developed in the extensive reconnaissance phase. Within the rubric of action research the facilitator must enable learning and create a reflective dialogue that can lead towards the development of mechanisms to move forward. The facilitator's skill, perceptiveness and sensitivity can therefore determine the depth and quality of the content developed within the

focus groups (Murphy et al., 1992). Fontana and Frey (1994) highlighted that to do this the facilitator must be flexible, objective, empathic, persuasive and a good listener. Furthermore, the context of the focus group must allow for all participants to respond, react to and raise pertinent issues with a view to creating a dynamic *conversation* as opposed to that of an individual (Baker, 1994). In this regard, the researcher attempted to create a relaxed environment with flexible and inclusive questioning and tasks.

4.6 Analysis

Following completion of the focus group the researcher and the senior colleague stayed behind to discuss the flow and content of the discussions, which was recorded within the summary notes. The Dictaphone data was transcribed verbatim and used alongside the summary notes from the researcher and rapporteur to provide a summary of feedback to the participants within a week of the focus group taking place (see Appendix H). The analysis of focus groups has come under scrutiny and question (Basch, 1987; Carey and Smith, 1994) with regards to recognising the impact of the *group* setting, leading to incomplete or inappropriate data analysis (Carey and Smith, 1994). In this study, senior management from EitC were provided with a summary of the focus group session with a view to revisiting and using this at a later date (see Study 2, Part II). This process allowed the practitioners to reflect on initial mechanisms to move forward discussed within the focus group and consider an actual change strategy, as part of the action research process during Part II of Study 2. Verbatim citations (i.e., the voice and actual language of senior management from with EitC) helped to illustrate reactions, motivations and feelings (Lederman, 1990; Kitzinger, 1994). To ensure confidentiality and professional integrity participants involved (n=2) that made up the senior management of EitC will have their names removed and replaced with pseudonyms.

To help develop a greater understanding of the research process, and facilitate the synthesis of both Part I and Part II the pertinent issues relating to the participants have been identified in **bold type set**. These issues are discussed in a summary of both Part I and Part II. To enable the familiarity with the research participants, the next section briefly introduces each participant through profiles.

4.7. Participant profile

Peter Conn

Having played within several North West football clubs as a youth player and semi-professional Peter eventually hung up his playing boots and through the support of the Professional Footballers Association (PFA) made the transition (like many others) from a playing career into the emerging Football in the Community programmes that clubs began to adopt. Peter (now in his 30's) worked within a reputable FitC programme in a lower level of English football pyramid Peter was recruited by EitC in a senior management position to organise and manage the growing organisation. Prior to moving into management Peter worked as both a performance and community coach with a football club. Peter has maintained his interest and qualification in football coaching. In this regard, he has both a management and coaching background. Peter was the operational contact throughout the research project.

Gary James

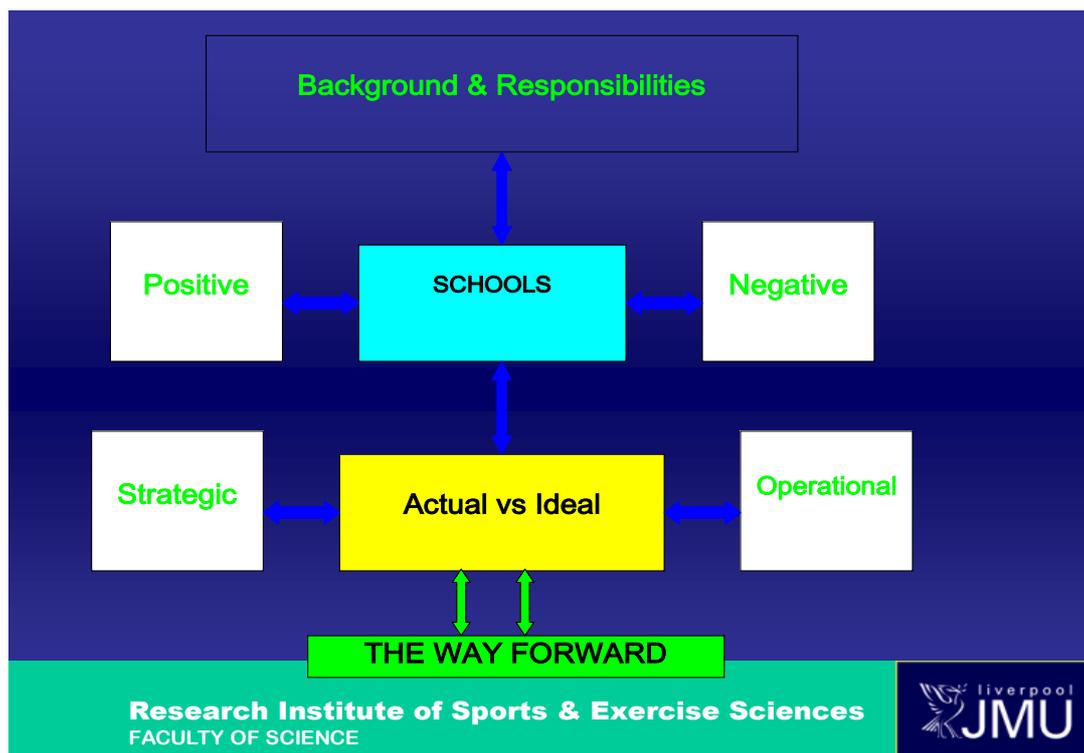
'Gary' is in his 40's and was head hunted into the organisation to provide strategic direction and financial stability. With a finance background and sport franchise experience in Canada Gary is not the archetypal FitC member of staff (i.e., with no past English football or football experience). Gary played a key role in the development of the partnership between Greggs North West Plc, LJMU and EitC and remained the key strategic contact in this partnership.

4.8. Results - Study 2, Part I

Everton in the Community Senior Management Focus Group, 16 July 2007

In attendance: Mr Peter Conn (Participant 1), Mr Gary James (Participant 2), Mr Daniel Parnell (facilitator), Dr David Richardson (rapporteur).

Slide 1



Aims: This slides aimed to explore the role of the school, the relationship between the school and EitC, the school socio-economic status of the school and the schools impact on the positive and negative experiences, actual vs ideal, operational and strategic working practices, with a view to identify ways forward to address emerging issues.

Summary and context of responses

Both Peter and Gary highlighted that, ideally, coaches would arrive in good time for the coaching sessions within a school setting and the children would be prepared and ready to play. It was

suggested that the schools had a bigger role to play within interventions and clearer roles and responsibilities were required.

DP detailed the reoccurring problem of children not being ready for the start of the session

PC: Would that be our responsibility or the schools?

DP: Maybe, that's something we would need to find out.

GJ: My gut feeling would be is that, that would be a school issue.

PC: Without a doubt. **The schools must be responsible** for getting their children ready, on time for PE. If they don't...you know it's difficult, because children will then need their shoelaces tied...I think that there always going to be 10 minutes into your session before you start dependent on maybe the age group.

GJ: But I do think the coaches recognise this.

PC: Yeah, and maybe going down and calling them up, if that's the right word?

DP: Yeah well, operationally it's difficult for the coaches if they get there and the children are not ready.

Working with schools offers continual challenges with regards to maximising the time spent within the school delivering sport and physical activity. Senior management are quick to highlight this is the schools responsibility and they should act to ensure the children are ready to play at the beginning of a session.

DP: Do you think it is important to have the children ready for when the coaches get there?

PC: In an ideal environment yeah. School's are not really an ideal environment, but if it was then they all would be ready, dependent on their age.

DP: So if it came down to the coaches organising the session, what would be an ideal situation for when the coaches arrive?

GJ: It starts at 2 o'clock and it starts at 2 o'clock.

PC: **As long as the coach is there before 2 o'clock.**

GJ: Not that the coaches arrive at 2 and start at 2:10, because that is inadequate.

PC: In some schools, when the children don't come until ten past because of getting changed or assembly, then as long as there is a coach there ready.

The nature of EitC is that coaches need to arrive on time to deliver, as the sessions are paid by the hour as part of contracts. Essentially, Peter and Gary are recognising there isn't time (i.e., funding resources) for preparation in the coaches' schedule.

DP: From our results, and you have just mentioned it there before that it [timing and session start time] is a school issue, the schools need to fully embrace the project...therefore if there is a problem with the school you can get them to sort it out. This never happened, when there were problems. Neither the coaches nor the schools [teachers] recognised a problem, but neither did anything to change it. They didn't go to one another to sort it out. **This is not to say that the project has not worked ok in all schools, however if you come back to the strategic aim of the project – to promote behaviour change/lifestyle change. It had worked better in schools that have been fully engaged and the head teacher had bought in to the concept of the purpose of the project...**

GJ: **Would you expect that result anyway?**

DP: Yeah, but now for future projects can you tell me how you could get the head teacher to buy in to the project from the start?

GJ: You would have to have the coaches going in ahead of the sessions and laying down the expectations of the six weeks, so if a six week project is coming up. **Before the six week project begins the coaches should be going in potentially and saying 'hi my name is Steve, this is what I expect. I need the children on the playground by 2 o'clock, not out on the playground by ten past, where then I go through the rules and regulations and it is now quarter past and I have now lost fifteen minutes'. Which in some instances the coaches are going to enjoy because they have now gone from a 45 minute session to a thirty minute session!** But in certain instances it then impinges on the child, as they go from receiving a 45 minute session to a 30 minute session. Or whatever the case may be. I would say that the communication of coaches saying the children need to be on the playground ready to go by 2 o'clock, not getting ready 2 o'clock. **So it's just a laying down of what we expect.**

DP: I think during the project that I have seen that the coaches have seen children coming out late and not being ready.

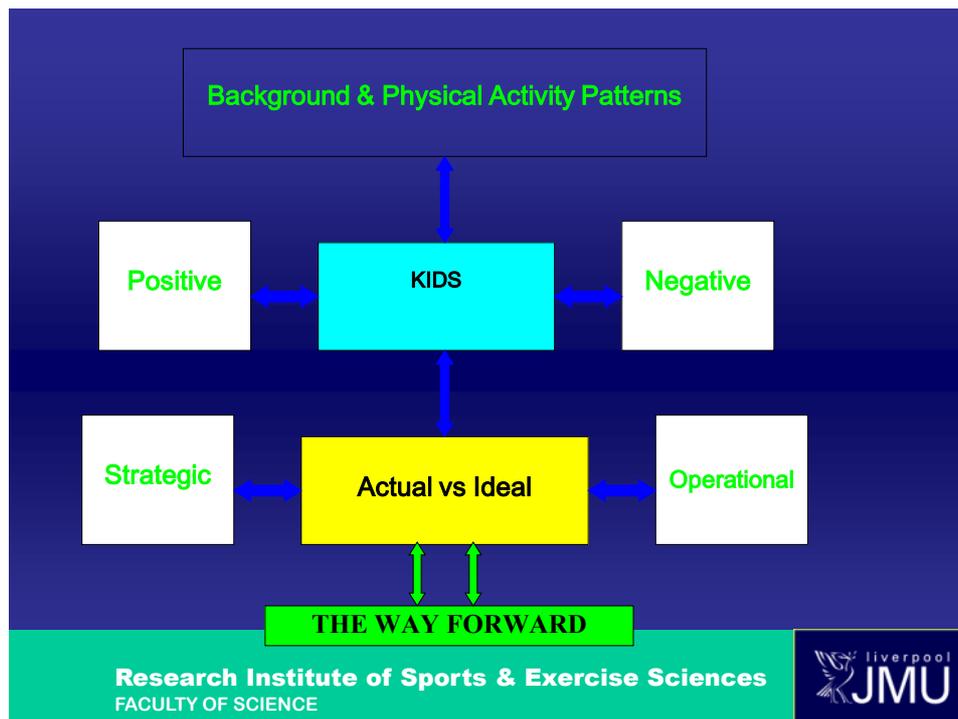
GJ: And there's just been an 'ah well, I will just leave it to the teacher'?

DP: Yes, there's been a little 'moan' [complaint] then things have been left to 'roll' [carry on]. Nothing has been done about it.

Whilst Gary readily accepts this is an obvious and straight forward outcome, it isn't apparent that he realises that this clearly wasn't evident within this EitC intervention. Senior management within EitC recognise the need for the coaches to act, but it isn't clear whether they have digested that this basic requirement is missing. The discussion is suggesting that coaches are not concerned with the children arriving late. Gary outlines the basic approach of a coach and mocks

that the coaches may be happier with a shorter session, but also then highlights it is the coaches' responsibility to lay down what EitC expect. This is a real issue because of the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities between the schools and EitC has evidently created unintended negative impacts on strategic and operational practice.

Slide 2



Aims: This slide aims to explore the children's demographic and physical activity data, the positive and negative experiences experienced by the children and to explore actual vs ideal, operational and strategic working practices and how they have influenced the findings. In order to, identify ways forward to address issues that emerge.

Summary and context of responses

Throughout the discussion of the findings it was apparent that the intervention lacked a clear strategic aim as no such health improvement (or behaviour change) agenda materialised. Obesity was suggested as a potential future strategic target (but a girl focused intervention was also mentioned), but would require a formal selection criteria that could build upon some of the positive findings. This would also potentially reduce the attrition rate. It was noted that this

'drop-out rate' must be tracked. Selecting children who want to play football and using incentives were also highlighted.

DP outlined the findings relating to physical activity and BMI of the children and some of the findings from that data. Before running through some details regarding the (lack of) selection criteria within the intervention.

DP: So staying with the selection criteria. All teachers said that they picked the children themselves, with no input from the EitC coaches. In the schools there would be instances where there would be only a few children turning up [to the coaching sessions], which would affect the flow of the sessions and operations of the coach, with coaches saying to me 'this is ridiculous, we can't work with six kids'. Do you think that this method of selection is best for the strategic aim?

PC: For an after school programme?

DP: Yeah, well for a behaviour changing [health improvement] programme.⁷

GJ: Unless you have a selection criteria in place that is the only selection criteria you have got...

PC: The teachers are going to be more aware of the children; of what they can and can't do.

DP: But they [the teachers] are not told of what type of children our wanted by EitC, so therefore you could be getting any children, any population of children.

PC: From an EitC point of view that's fine, because that's what we are about, participation.

DP: Yes, but from a strategic point of view, if you are looking at a project at promoting healthy lifestyle and behaviour change [health improvement]. It comes away from helping the general community, which I know you are about, to be being more specific, to have more of an effect strategically, you possibly need to be more specific.

PC: On that I don't agree that we need identify fat people.

DP: Perhaps yes, but we have already said that your intervention is keeping active children, who love football, active. So they are active anyway and you are keeping them active...

GJ: We would know that and I think that is a general consensus across everything that we do. We know that a 100% of what we do is...or whatever the number it might be 80% of the children are already very active and relatively active because of the schools we go in and the activities that go on in the schools. I would suggest that we could probably attest to what you have found. **That what we do is to affect a general populace in a generally satisfactory way**, but if we were to look more specifically at obese children, then we would have to run a programme specifically aimed at obese children.

SR is nodding and musing in agreement.

GJ: In that instance then we would be picking them out. I think the danger is that we would be tailoring a programme to look after children's behaviour. It's hard to specifically identify, without excluding children and putting them into a category. This would be really quite risky for us to venture into, without saying this is the fat session come on in.

PC: You have to take into account their feelings.

GJ: We have to stay clear politically of that type of identification of somebody.

DP outlines the practicalities of a health improvement projects that has a clearly defined selection criteria working across the City of Liverpool. DP also highlighted the positive changes seen in two children within the intervention and the potential this offers for a greater impact.

GJ: Are we not influencing lifestyles, as a community organisation, as opposed to changing the way, or influencing or giving them the opportunity to change?

DP: I would say that just promoting healthy lifestyles and encouraging physical activity, but what we have there, in them two children [evidence of increased physical activity], if it is working, which it appears to be with them. If your selection population was all the children that were say hard to reach, loved football, but never really got involved at dinner time, or at recess because they never had the confidence to play with the other lads [children] or they were a bit quieter, or they were overweight. If you got them and you ran sessions with them, then surely there's a chance that what we have here...positive changes, could be repeated on a bigger scale and be more advantageous for your strategic aim. Do you know what I mean?

GJ: Yeah, yeah.

DP: If you were going to target someone for the intervention, who would your ideal target be, or would you be happy just to hit a wide base?

GJ: I think generally we have always been happy to hit the wide base.

DP: And you Peter?

PC: Well yeah. I think that most things are targeted in general, **although I take you point in terms of identifying a certain reason, if you want to reduce the obesity levels, then you would need to target more obese children through in relation to the school as well.**

DP: I suppose this might come down to your philosophies and how much you want to achieve promoting physical activity and behaviour change. If you want to achieve more, we can aim more specifically to achieve that outcome.

PC: Rather than being general?

Peter and Gary have evident reservations regarding focusing or targeting a specific population.

Despite this, throughout the conversation they began to see the potential of becoming more

effective and increasing their impact. Peter noted that EitC are all about participation and Gary suggests that EitC work with the general population at a satisfactory level.

DP: Yes, make it more focused and more specific. One teacher highlighted to me that there were girls in the project. These girls went to every session and took part in all my parts as well [the research], which is an achievement in itself. These girls never used to play football in the yard because it was just a 'boy thing'. But because they were on [the intervention], more girls came onto the sessions and they have now become integral to playing football at recess and lunch times.

GJ: That statistic gives me more than potentially focusing on the obese. That has increased the participation of girls. On hearing that two girls started the programme and more girls joined, that is what we would like to see a programme on. We would like to see that type of statistic in every school that we go to. Picking five schools and taking two girls from every year group who are not playing and by the end of six week session, now actually ten girls are playing consistently every week and that would be a result for us. That's what we do. We take two, up to four, up to six, up to ten. So I would definitely be encouraged by that type of statistic and that type of programme, if we could come with a programme that showed us exactly what you just said then that would be something we would be interested in. In fact that's what we should have for our female schools development officer. That would be his role to identify to Peter and I that there are two girls in each class that I would work with and by the end of there is 6 in each class that I work with. Of course that would be result.

DP: I suppose what it comes down to is, if you want a behaviour change/ lifestyle change intervention then you will have to aim more specifically towards it, instead of having a project where these little things happens, but there is no specific aim for targeting one or the other.

Gary was quick to jump onto a statistic and then create a very narrow focused project simply for girls with a loose selection criterion. At this point, it seemed clear that both have an understanding that targeting their service (or resources) more effectively could offer greater strategic rewards.

DP: Ok moving on to the drop out. **In total 31 children dropped out.** For various reasons from the weather, to not enjoying the session, to children simply not wanting to come, **which again brings us back to the fact that there is no selection criteria, therefore the teachers are just picking kids that they think want to come instead of asking them. Maybe this is something you need to think about.** Both parties (coaches and teachers) recognised that there was a problem with drop out, however without a specific selection criteria, it's hard to see how these problems can be solved. There were 31 drop outs and the reasons were, that they were not enjoying the sessions, some just stop wanting to come, some stopped coming because their mates stopped coming, some were chosen that didn't want to come in the first place, some had other commitments with other clubs, but were still picked to come to this as well. These were the main reasons for the children stopping coming. Some children did come back,

however of these some left again. I suppose that if the teachers just picked the children that loved football and asked the children, then maybe less children would have dropped out.

Peter mused.

GJ: It makes you wonder about the worth or potential value maybe a better word.

PC: In the sense of getting them to stay the course?

GJ: To maintain their involvement of them over the full period of time. Whether its match day tickets or whatever we can think of? Or then would they (the children) just be staying for the reward?

PC: **I guess that will always be a catch 22 won't it, I suppose. The nature of the kids that you are working with, you are always going to have a drop out. Some of the reasons that I have jotted down, like 'not enjoying the session' is the one that alarms me it terms of, I ask why?**

GJ: Well, it might be the sessions. Was it the fact that it was cricket when they thought they were doing football [asked in a serious manner].

Having detailed the facts regarding the attrition rate evident within the intervention and as Gary mentioned that the session content may play a contributing factor in this, the researcher took this as a cue to move forward and discuss the emerging issues surrounding the role of the coach.

Slide 3

Characteristics

Can you give me the ideal characteristics of a community coach, in order of importance.

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Aims: This slide aim to explore the participants perspectives on the ideal characteristics of a community coach.

Summary and context of responses

This very short activity gave us the opportunity to gain an insight into the strategic perspective of what is required of the community coach prior to discussion the coach and working practice in more detail. Interestingly, they offer quite distinct views on the ideal characteristics of the coach.

Dan gave both Peter and Gary time to complete their list or description separately.

DP: Are you ready?

GJ: Yeah sure.

DP: Ok what have you got?

GJ: I have knowledge of particular sport, interpersonal skills, ability to improvise, adapt and over come, ability to increase and decrease skills required dependent on the person standing before them, qualifications and experience.

DP: Ok.

GJ: The last two are in no particular order.

PC: I had they should be child focused, or centred, patient is the key one for me. It must be fun, encouraging, a good communicator at their level, enthusiastic, positive and approachable, that's it.

GJ: They seem slightly different. You were purely pragmatic; you were purely coach led, child friendly, fun...

Peter laughs.

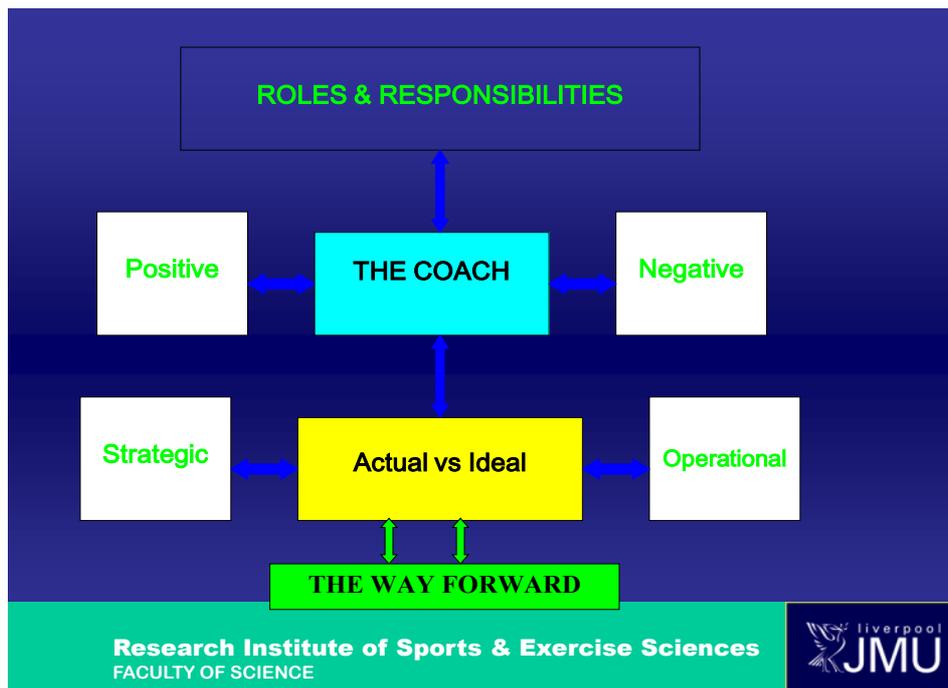
GJ: Here's me interpersonal skills...

DP: After interviewing the coaches, we had six in total. Each highlighted the importance of integrating fun and enjoyment into the sessions. Other points that the coaches highlighted were that they needed to be a good role model for the children to look up and a good listener.

GJ: Just what Peter had.

We laugh.

Slide 4



Aims: This slide aimed to explore the role of the coach, their working practice and how this impacted upon the effectiveness of the intervention, exploring the positive and negative experiences of the participants, actual vs ideal practice, operational and strategic working practices that have influenced the findings, with a view to identifying ways forward to address the emerging issues.

This slides aimed to explore the role of the school, the relationship between the school and EitC, the school socio-economic status of the school and the schools impact on the positive and negative experiences, actual vs ideal, operational and strategic working practices. With a view to identify ways forward to address emerging issues.

Summary and context of responses

Staff recruitment and induction was discussed, as was the development of coach education and quality assurance to develop ways to tackle punctuality issues incoherent sessions and elements of poor coaching practice. Additional reference was made to allowing coaches to record and reflect on working practice, building some quality assurance and exploring the current coaches'

code of conduct. The extensive coaching workload and professional development was also discussed.

DP detailed some positives relating to coaching practice including examples of encouragement, enthusiasm and positive feedback from children. This summary finished by highlighting an overall sense of satisfaction from the children. DP highlighted that some children remarked that some parts of the session they never enjoyed and had negative memories of the sessions.

DP: I will run through some comments [from the children] ‘I got bored because we kept doing the same thing each week’, ‘we warmed up sometimes for half an hour’, ‘I wish I had more time to play matches’, ‘if the coach already had everything set up and ready for when we came out, then they wouldn’t waste our time setting up’, ‘the coach told me to shut up and I didn’t like it’.

GJ: There are probably 3 or 4 alarm bells there.

PC: Yeah.

DP: These issues suggest that some coaches are forgetting or do not know that they are coaching these children with a view to increasing physical activity. The actual content of the sessions did not differ greatly between the coaches, so the main coaches would deliver pretty similar sessions each week. I have spoken to the coaches about this. Is there a set of session plans for the coaches for them to deliver in the community sessions?

PC: Is there?

DP: Yeah?

PC: Yes.

DP: Are they used?

PC: Probably, hap-hazardly is the answer.

DP: Are they based around any particular programme or is it just general sessions.

PC: In terms of your programme [the intervention]?

DP: No, in terms of any programme.

PC: **No, just general.**

DP: Is there specific lifestyle or behaviour change session plans?

PC: **I think any session can be adapted to or account for those areas.**

DP: **Ok, do you think the coaches would need further training on how to promote behaviour or lifestyle change.**

PC: **I wouldn’t do anybody any harm to gain extra skills.**

GJ: This is probably part of our own re-evaluation of the schools programme. If we are being honest the schools programme when I arrived, as it stood failed. I would suggest that the results of this would have been 80 times worse had we done this last year. Not that I have done anything specifically. I am just suggesting that who was running the schools programme before would have been vastly different than those running it now. And in actual fact the schools programme we have now is probably not a true reflection, because today it really is not in existence, as a schools programme. [GJ is alluding to the fact the school development programme has evolved from what it originally was]

PC: That would be fair to say.

DP: Ok.

GL: They would have been doing lesson plans adhoc at best. Now that they are doing them. I think that we need perhaps to tailor them, which we talked about internally, specifically.

PC: In their [the coaches] defence though. I think they are experienced coaches; they are all level 2 or level 3 coaches. And it does come a point where you do need to know your coaching limit if you like and the games that they like to do. In regards to myself, I won't always do session plans because I know what I am doing. I like to think I know what I am doing, but it's good practice to do session plans.

DP: Well one coach has informed that, when I asked him about training *'you don't need to show me how to make children suck eggs. I have my sessions perfected and I don't think we can be taught anymore'*.

Peter and Gary talked about the existence of session plans, however it appears that they are not being used effectively nor do they support the delivery of interventions that have a specific aim. Peter accepts that sessions plans should be used, however then goes on to support the coaches not using sessions plans at a particular level of coaching qualification and/or experience. Admitting himself that he does not always do session plans, but that is because 'he knows what he is doing'. Gary outlined that the schools programme has more support than it has had in the past, however, recognises that little has likely changed. In terms of staff development, Peter appears to reluctantly accept there is scope for development in specific coaching areas despite hearing the initial elements of evidence supporting poor experiences within the intervention.

DP: Bearing in mind the children had negative memories, the coaches also highlighted that there is no in house training and if they have a session they would just chat about it over the table. This could be enough; however you don't then know what the coaches are

actually delivering when they go to the schools. Coming back to the strategic aim of the project, I asked the coaches what they thought the project was about and this is some of their answers 'Yes, it's about healthy lifestyles and giving pedometers and the schools have bought into it'. 'Yes, its increased participation in activity through offering a programme of additional coaching sessions to increase their activity'. 'Trying to get people involved in sports, obviously it revolves around football to get people more active, but not everyone is interested in football, so the more sports you bring in the better it is for the school. Plus there is more advertisement [for EitC] within the school'. You can see there is quite a bit of variety in what the coaches think the intervention is about. Which suggests it might be difficult for the coach to deliver on any strategic aim if the coaches who are delivering this content are unaware of the purpose of their work. On top of this, if we set up a community coaching intervention with a purpose, with a strategic aim will be influenced by the time, the 60 minutes, which the coaches have in the schools. Have the coaches ever been briefed on the project?

GJ: Certainly not [briefed] from my point of view.

DP: Yeh.

PC: No, I would beg to differ, to be perfectly honest. I think they did know about the project and why they were doing it. They may not have known the detail. I was under the impression that they didn't need to know the detail because it was a project that we were working on collaboratively.

DP: OK, do you think the coaches would be able to promote behaviour change [increases in physical activity]? Should they [the coaches] be expected to make behaviour change just through a coaching session? So would you say the coaching staff have delivered any differently in my sessions than they would in any other school coaching sessions?

PC: Probably not.

GJ: I would say probably not.

DP: So would the intervention session be able to create behaviour change?

PC: I think there is an element of them knowing that is was about behaviour change, working with 12 obese people, it's quite logically that they need to incite some sort of change. **I think when it's just being a year 6, year 4 class for example, a year programme, it's going to be pretty much the same in their [the coaches] eyes, so they are going to be delivering something basic that they typically do anyway.**

DP: OK – can you describe to me what you think would be an ideal coaching session for promoting behaviour change?

PC: I wouldn't have thought there is any ideal session to do; it's just running round and engaging with young people. And really keeping them adaptable, and bringing out the best in them to a certain degree through football or running round playing tick [a traditional school playground game] for 5 minutes, every kid loves that. And that's creating some sort of change, in terms of tackling obesity through running around for 5 minutes.

GJ: The potential for a programme like that, even just playing tick or whatever, that in itself will be promoting social skills, developing skills such as fairness, fair play and that is in some argument and description is behavioural change. Even playing games of passing, that is some level promotes fairness and sharing, so some teachers in some schools would argue that, that is the level that we are involved with. I would with any sessions that are involved specifically with behavioural change the sessions will always.

PC: Probably, sometimes the coaches are sometimes doing the generic coaching sessions, unaware it engages children in behaviour and lifestyle change...skills.

DP: Ok, to be more strategic in the project, would it be beneficial for the coaches to be more knowledgeable, highlighting what they are doing and how to make their sessions more...

GL: Well, I think that's why we did the brain training game [a form of training available], because that was a level of skill, that hasn't been taken on by many people. Brain training without the terminology helps train the players. That's why people have employed a coach to put positive thoughts on the players pre-game. And that's what we have been doing going through the process of mind training and brain gym, which has impacted on what the coaches understand about how the child may feel dependent on what that may be. So I think we have tried to look at it, but I think it's too darn specific. I don't think that's what we do when we go into school. **Generally, we are not looking to change a behavioural pattern, unless it's been identified through football or through a sport, that it changes a child's behaviour, its then I think we would.** We would have a coach that would say I would take that on, I have experience running it. Then we would be able to say we change. But I don't think we specifically, we do have that when we go in to schools.

DP: But specifically, that's what this programme is about, isn't it? To promote behaviour and lifestyle change?

GL: Behaviour change in its broadest sense. So if we literally have 10 children more active then we have achieved our objective. Loosely. Peter?

PC: Err, yeh. I think even if it's just a minimum effect that it's had [the intervention]. It's made a difference to my coaching. You know, it may not be a holistic approach, but it's made a difference to me. Certainly...

GL: We are the last ones, the last step in the chain, of several people within a child's day, that contribute to changing that child's behaviour...or activity level.

The discussion during the focus group appeared to highlight that the EitC coaches were not specifically briefed or supported on delivering the intervention. Similarly, Peter and Gary are not looking for sport/football participation alone to offer the vehicle of behaviour change and not necessarily the content or messages within a strategic coaching intervention. Paul and Gary's comments detailing his notions of behaviour change with a view to tackling to obesity epidemic, suggest a very narrow and limited understanding of the complexity of obesity and the challenges

of tackling this social issue. Both appear to have only ‘just’ considered how this behaviour change message is delivered by the coaches and appear to assume that participation in football (alone) is enough to change behaviour. The conversation suggested that Peter and Gary may have also lacked some explicit understanding around how to promote health improvement via football. The discussion continued as Peter and Gary outlined that EitC are part, or should be part, of a number of agencies supporting positive health promotion in a child’s day-to-day experiences.

DP: The coaches seem to understand what is expected of them as a community coach, and I asked about what they should deliver and focus on. **They came back with, “a community coach should focus on enjoyment, even for the kids that can’t play, you have to make it enjoyable or you have lost them.” “They wanna play, [the children] won’t play if they don’t enjoy it.”** This shows that the coach knows that the kids won’t play if they don’t enjoy it. However, from the focus group data, and from what some children have mentioned previously is that some coaches have struggled with the sessions. **The coaches that have the most experience coaching children in a community setting and also aspired to develop within EitC and not Everton academy, another club or another academy,** delivered sessions that had less problems with behaviour and the children said that they enjoyed it more. And they seemed to get more of a kick out of it in my reflections having watched the sessions.

In the school development setting, the coaches were limited to what they could do. The coaches set the children a task they could not achieve and instead of adapting the activity for the ability of the group. The coaches would become frustrated for example one coach said, ‘If you can’t do this [i.e., pass with your hands] you will never be able to pass on the floor’. Which will affect the children’s self-esteem and likely reduce their participation in sport, and you are not, or at least less likely to meet the strategic aim of the project, so behaviour change.

Some of the children in this session couldn’t manage to get this right, however the same coach with the same children came the following week and ran a passing drill that was unsuitable for the ability of the group. The children failed to do it, but they made them do it, again and again right through until the end of the session. The coach again became frustrated because they couldn’t do it, or because they felt it was a reflection on their coaching ability and they couldn’t get the children to do it. I don’t know...?

Silence within the focus group.

DP: There appears to be a **mis-match between what the coaches are delivering and what you want them to do, as before you join EitC it is a pre-requisite to have a Level 2 or Level 3 [English Football Association coaching qualification] in the community.** Before you are employed or maybe you need someone who can work well with children, helping them develop skills, someone who will just let them play, instead of giving them drills.

So the coaches need to understand what they need to deliver. So when they come in with a Level 2 coaching qualification, some coaches will perceive that to mean you need to coach Level 2 type stuff instead of fun games like you mentioned before. Would you be surprised if you went to watch one of the sessions and the coaches just let the children play matches? With say different restrictions?

PC: I think it depends on how old the children were?

DP: Well, 7-11 [years] boys and girls.

PC: Erm,

DP: It could be a whole session with different size versions of matches games 2v2, 3v3, no goalkeepers, 1 touch finish etc.

PC: As a coach, I wouldn't be opposed to that. **Provided it was small sided games.** And it was pretty clear that the focus was towards 11v11. I would say, as long as they warm-up and cool down, that people can learn playing small sided games. I wouldn't be opposed to that, but I wouldn't want to see that going on every week.

GJ: Are you suggesting that this has gone on?

DP: I have not seen any of this. **The type of things that the children have told me they want, what is coming from the FA** [national Football Association] and other science and football literature, is saying that instead of giving them drills, give them games that they can play like small sided games. That will be fun and replicate game situations.

Within the focus group discussion continued around the delivery of coaching content and qualifications. Peter and Gary appeared to be quite muted regarding some of the revelations with regards to coaching practice. At this point it appeared pertinent for the researcher to focus on sharing some specific examples of poor coaching and poor working practice issues to offer some further context to the discussion.

DP: Ok, well I have seen some fantastic sessions where a more experienced coach has turned up and straight away tried to find out about the children and it's been brilliant, the warm up has been really fun, because I spent more time with the children, I was given a mass of feedback on every session. I guess of all the sessions, there was one stand out...the one where the children could not achieve the task given to them I mentioned earlier. **What happened was, that in front of the parents the coach had said, "These are rubbish, I have had enough of them. You (DP) can do it!" to me. I quickly realised a parent was present, who knew what was going on. I watched the rest of the session. Then at the end, I said do you want to speak to the children [to the coach], it was the last session before half term, who replied, "No, I wash my hands with them, I'm off."** So they left me to wrap up [finish off] the session with the children, with a well done, have a great holiday and that sort of stuff. That's just another example of what's happened with me.

Silence within the focus group.

DP: Behaviour was a problem in schools, which comes back, a bit, to the selection criteria. **The coaches changed quite frequently and would often have varying boundaries and approaches [behaviour and discipline]. When the coaches arrived on time and set up the session in advance the children appeared to behave better.** In one instance, a coach arrived early, set up the session, outlined his expectations, 'You are going to listen to what I say and do it, I know you are going to behave and we will have a game at the end'. Straight away he had said what he expected from the children and what the reward was going to be. **I (DP) am always there early and typically the problem has been coaches arriving late. On this occasion, the coach was early, set up. When I looked out of the window I was surprised, but when the children looked out they got excited and said 'Who's that? Who's that?'. Straight away it created a buzz around the room, because this coach was new and prepared. The session went great, with little behaviour problems. However, the next week a coach came in and someone talked straight away and got sent out.** The children felt displeased for getting sent out and spent half the session doing lines [traditional school based behaviour punishment involving re-writing a set sentence]. The next week they [the children] spoke, well whispered in the preview of the session and were again sent out for the session to do lines.

PC: When you say lines, do you mean the coach gave them [the children] lines?

DP: No, the children were sent in and the teacher would assume that they had obviously mis-behaved and gave them lines. So on guidelines and boundaries, are they any set guidelines for coaches?

PC: In terms of what?

DP: In terms of action to take or deal with situations, if the children mis-behave within sessions?

PC: **I think in terms of guidelines, in any situation, I certainly think about my own session, if there any incidents in the session, if I couldn't deal with it myself I would engage the teacher. I wouldn't necessarily disperse [send out] somebody out of the session because they were whispering.**

DP: So is there any set guidelines for coaches?

PC: **I would say that there is yeah.**

GJ: Yeah.

PC: **There is a code of conduct, which is for coaches, which spells out, maybe not in the same language as your identifying there, but pretty much similar. In terms, of being respectable, patient with to the children, as opposed to sending them off to do lines or something.**

DP: There has been a few situations where it has been difficult for me not to step in. As a researcher, observing, watching some of the things [coaching practice] that have happened.

This lateness appears to link to the coaches general [unprofessional] behaviour, in that On occasion coaches are arriving with excuses from, 'I didn't know I was doing the session', which comes back to communication and operations, 'I didn't know where it was', was an excuse of one coach who had delivered 3 sessions in the school already, but was still 30 minutes late.

GJ: Was there any frequency down to it being the same person?

DP: The lateness was across the board [all coaches]. **On other occasions a volunteer has been dropped off with me and just left with me. Which wasn't ideal, as I was only supposed to be there as an observer.**

PC: For the whole session?

DP: Yes, even when the volunteers came with the coaches they typically took the whole session. **And I think that was because the rapport between the kids and the coach was so poor.**

PC: Was that just in one school or every school?

DP: That was at one school, however the bad rapport was across a number of schools. On three occasions parents came up to me and asked why the coach was 15 minutes late. Again this wasn't great...

PC: What were the kids doing whilst the coach was running late, were they all ready to go or...?

DP: They would hang about. The kids would come out 5 minutes late and wait for the coaches another ten minutes, so they would just hang about. I didn't have any equipment with me, but because I was at every session, the parents would look to me for answers. Are the coaches given enough time to get to, and/or prepare for, sessions?

PC: **I can only say that they are yeah. It's their responsibility to get to sessions on time. Again, it's in the code of conduct that we are all familiar with.**

DP: The continuity of the coach, varied greatly and the children did not know who was coming each week. You expect them to know who was coming, but in many cases I didn't know who was coming either. This was particularly important for the children, as one coach would promise a game or matches or tournament and then the next/new coach would come and do a session and miss out the tournament. This would make the children frustrated and be likely why we had behavioural problems. Additionally, the new coaches would deliver what other coaches already have.

PC: **The same sessions, do you mean?**

DP: **Yes, pretty much similar yeah. I guess this builds on from session plans and how the coaches gather their knowledge to get into schools.** It appeared that the coaches lacked an understanding of games or the purpose of the sessions. Maybe this is fair to say, given the issues we have discussed. Are there any questions on the last bit here, as we have been a little all over the place? With lateness, behaviour and the coach? Positives and negatives elements of practice.

PC: Erm, was there a register taken of which coach was there during the sessions?

DP: Yes.

PC: There was. Did the respective coaches take the register? Who took care of that?

DP: I took care of the registers. Unless in my absence, Mark, an assistant researcher, would have taken it.

PC: So you have copies of all the registers?

DP: Yes.

PC: In terms of staff registers as well?

DP: Yes, I have. [Gary and Peter laugh]

GJ: I know what you are thinking. [laughs] He knows what I was going to say.

DR: In the interest of anonymity...

GJ: Yeah, yeah - I knew that was coming. That's why I didn't ask the questions.

DR: I guess this is an insight into what's happening and the nature of existence. And whether the coaches are able to deliver, what they deliver, what they should be doing, what you think they should be doing, what your expectations are of them?

PC: **From my point of view, I am pretty disappointed to be honest. You know, it is quite interesting really. From that point of view.**

GL: I would say at this point, that I would have expected this a year and half ago, I wouldn't have expected it now. **I have made lots of notes on what we should do to change that.** Also taking into account that this is one specific element [of EitC operations] that we were monitoring at what I would say is a very high level. Yes, it's critical when there is a very specific aim.

DP: In total, there have been 6 different coaches, which cover quite a lot of the team.

GJ: I don't mean be critical of Danny or this project, I just mean general. I would still suggest we [EitC] need to find out, and get to the bottom of these problems that cause concern. Because that is exactly what they are.

PC: I guess there is always two sides of the story. I guess, we are getting one side of the story. I would be interested in getting the other side of the story too.

DP: To be fair, I would like to say, it's not really a side of a story, it's just what I have seen. It's not my personal judgement; it's just what has happened. It's not necessarily what I think about good and bad, but more of what I have seen that has been important to highlight to you. What I have seen, what the coaches have said, what the children have said.

GJ: For me, forgetting about that. I would like to know what the other side of story is and whom. For me that is irrelevant to how the general perception is, because not being a coach, but having been around them enough, to know enough about them, I may have made the same observations you have made and would have been just as disappointed. **I would have gone in and watched the coaches, listened to the parents and how the coaches handled situations and stepped in and said, 'Hey, that's not how we run our business'.**

PC: Well, I think the coaches have come across differently, because maybe you were observing them. Perhaps, maybe they didn't even know you were observing them in a way that you did to be fair.

GJ: **But in a way, that is more alarming, so in a sense, that it doesn't matter.**

PC: Yeh.

GJ: Whether Dave, Danny, you or me, or the man on the street.

DP: I guess despite experience, if you had put anyone in to record what's going on...

PC: Well, I think it would have been different if it was myself or Gary there to a certain degree. You mentioned that one of the coaches said shut up to some of the kids at some point, or your rubbish...

DR: It's not what you're after though is it?

At the beginning of this part of the discussion both Gary and Peter appeared to be focusing on the irrelevant or small details, as opposed for accepting there were some serious problems in coaching practice. Both appeared to neglect to recognise their role in the fact the coaches were late, unprofessional and/or unprepared or deficient in skills to deliver the intervention. After failed attempts to bring the research into a witch-hunt it appeared that the findings linked to poor practice began to sink in. As we moved forward, for the first time in the focus group, it appeared that Gary and Peter were beginning to accept that coaching practice and some operational practice is simply not good enough. They both actively wanted to do something about this. Gary began to make considerations on how to deal with the findings and move forward with positive changes.

GJ: I respect the anonymity, but as much as I respect it, but I guess Peter has already got in his mind, tasked to work out who they [the coaches] are.

PC: Get them!

GJ: That's purely not from a witch-hunt kind of thing, but purely from a need to change what's gone on. Reflective of the whole staff, I am just as disappointed as you, if not more disappointed.

DP: As well as looking at the staffing, also we need to look at the coaches and the massive pressures on the coaches' time. Some coaches arrive at an afterschool session, after a full days coaching in schools, coaching that much over 4-5 days, plus a Saturday at the Club [supporting match day EitC operations], is a lot to demand of any coach.

PC: Pressure on time, in terms of workload?

DP: Yes, workload.

GL: Are you implying that I can't work the coaches 100%? [Everyone laughs].

The issues presented were determined by the environment and structures created by senior management. This needed to be considered moving forward, ensuring we took into account the real day-to-day existence of the EitC coaches.

DP: If you don't mind me asking Gary, you mentioned that you have made notes on how to make improvements, do you mind sharing them?

GJ: Erm, I have made a note, that potentially this is all down to being too thin on the ground [shortage of coaches], we need to look at imposing our standards on the coaches more specifically, and the issues around staff discipline, dismissing themselves from sessions and finding replacement staff that we wouldn't necessarily approve of; which all goes back to staff working 5, 6 and 7 days, which suggests we are thin on the ground. They are all things we need to look at.

Adopting this managerial perspective shows that Gary accepts that whilst some trust may have been ill placed in some staff, there is an element of responsibility that rests with the working environment in which the coaches operate (and he and Gary manage).

DP: There is certainly scope to make changes to improve this. One other area was that, for example, if I started as an Everton [EitC] coach tomorrow and my induction involved watching existing coaches for 3 weeks, my coaching wouldn't incorporate new techniques. I would try to conform to existing practice. Especially, if I see practice across 3 or 4 coaches, I would think I would try to fit in [coach/operate similar to existing coaching staff]. Good things would get passed on, but so would the bad. I did recognise this, throughout the intervention and during the 6 interviews and reviews of all my session reflections. It appears that some of the coaches are using the community programme as a stepping stone or stop gap for something better, a better position outside the community. Such as an academy or another club. To me, their sessions lacked enthusiasm, lacked preparation; they didn't appear to care or have any interest and would try to get others to deliver for them.

Whereas the coaches that aspire to go further within EitC within a management or officer role, some of whom have a little more experience; these guys tended to deliver the more structured, organised and ability focused sessions for the children.

PC: Talk us through an example of the 6 coaches, you say some are using for a stepping stone and some are using it to stay within EitC, give us an example... [GL laughs].

At this point Gary and Peter are again looking to read into the detail and context providing to find out the identity of the coaches involved in the research and especially those delivering poor coaching.

GJ: That's a clever way of putting it. But I think he can answer that?

DP: Well, the next phase...

GJ: Why are you so sure they are using this as a stepping stone?

DP: As your taking on coaches with Level 2 and Level 4 coaching qualifications, to then go and deliver in schools all they, there is no point in having these qualifications. Again, you are kind of hostage to who you employ...it's interesting that the coaches that are highly qualified and are experienced want to stay at EitC and don't want to go anywhere else. They are the ones that are delivering the most efficient sessions [fun, enjoyable with less behavioural disturbances].

GL: As for the ones that are looking to...I use the word you did, use us as a 'stepping stone', are they the ones, in your opinion, are they also the ones, which their level of commitment, did they not deliver the level of delivery that you would have expected?

DP: 2 definitely delivered less than expected and one most definitely. The other [of the 3] shows a need for real improvement.

DR: I have a question about the points you made regarding the characteristics of the coach, as many of the coaches displayed characteristics in line with a performance agenda.

GJ: Yes, that's what it come down to, from that, that's why we can relate sort of thing. Peter?

PC: Umm.

DP: There appeared to be a contradiction. Despite all the coaches recognising that it should be about enjoyment, fun, whether their knowledge of sessions or coaching session content expands further than performance oriented sessions, I don't know. The majority of sessions that were delivered were based around performance.

PC: Rather than?

DP: Rather than outcome based training. There was a predominance of drill based activities. Whereas, the two coaches that aspired to stay within EitC, based their sessions around fun as a whole.

GJ: So it was an element of laziness from the other guys. Laziness from the point of view that they had forgotten that they were to do the basic 'times-tables' [of coaching] and they were way ahead of that. They weren't looking at the basics.

DP: It's hard to say where this started because when new coaches join, they see what is going on in the community programme, as their trial period is watching other coaches. This makes it very difficult for new coaches to say, 'I don't think we should be doing this – I am going to base my sessions around fun'.

GJ: That would alarm me anyway, as I would want coaches to do that [question the normal practice]

DP: As new coaches come, it makes that very difficult.

GJ: Good, I have made a note of that.

Recruitment of new coaches appeared to be a really important area for consideration moving forward. Some of the cultural realities stemming from practices put in place by management appeared to really create a stir for action or change.

PC: When you started the programme were you under the impression that one coach was going to be delivering the entire programme, rather than I suppose 6 coaches?

DP: Well, I did think there would be one coach, but that depended on how far the schools programme expanded. I guess though, the nature of the reconnaissance phase was to see what happened and what typically goes one and proper idea. So if that what happens...

PC: I mean a key thing for me from this, is the consistency. There is no consistency whatsoever, in terms of staff and delivery of the programme.

DP: So looking at how we can change this then, what type of things can we do.

The fluid environment that appeared to lack structure and focus could not be more evident through the lack of consistency in coaches within EitC. As this appeared to be genuine news to both Gary and Peter (whilst appreciated), it created an atmosphere suggesting that there was a sense that these (senior management) should already know and be in the process of dealing with this.

GJ: The timing of this is bang on. We need the summary notes and we need to move on with action. There has been an underground movement around what we

would like to do via our performance summary. One thing I am interested in is coach quality assurance. It's not the best word, but there needs to be an element of this in there.

PC: You are certainly right, it's coach education.

GJ: Yes, I call it coach quality assurance, but yeah. But for us and in the interest of time, as I would like to continue going through it. What I am extremely keen to do, is pick this up again to review what we implement and almost to get all the staff to hear this as well.

PC: Yeah – I think...

GJ: It doesn't need to be couched as a Danny Parnell, LJMU thing...we almost need to say...but they [the coaches] wouldn't know where this has come from...and by no means to put you in a position...if either you guys say 'No', that it would jeopardise the integrity, then we wouldn't do it. But I think internally, we need to review this and I think we would be well within our rights to do that. **We need more than that, coach education or coach quality assurance, what's happened in a nutshell, is that we have grown exponentially. With that we have brought in staff, that have either had to adapt or we have inherited staff from old systems. Because of the growth, and to use this analogy, we have put out the 'big fires', now we need to run back and put out the small fires that are reoccurring. For me this is one of those fires, the big stuff, we need to come back and deal with this. In actual fact, the little stuff is actually the biggest things and this is one of those things. Fundamentally, we can say this is all the wonderful things we are doing, but if we are not getting this right, then we need to take stock.** To get a person, who can consistently evaluate, not different to how a head teacher evaluates his staff or how schools are evaluated for Ofsted in a similar way. **Quality assurance has to be number one. This is something that we have only just got to grips with and been able to identify. Because the growth has been so fast and so quick, so we need quality assurance.** You talk about a year, but for us it could be a more consistent evaluation, that brings people in consistently. But that's something we can talk about. There will be a cost to this that I need to consider. Although you can't put a cost to quality assurance. For the record, this is absolutely an invaluable tool [the research] and we can go forward and embrace this and improve moving forward. Especially, with quality assurance.

Ultimately, if we keep on growing at the pace that we do, we will never get back to basics and quality. For us, we are hiring 50 new staff and quality assurance has been discussed already. We will affect 133,000 children across Liverpool next year through those staff. We need to get this right, for new the staff coming. They have to be quality assured for here and for all operations.

It appeared pertinent at this point to draw proceedings to an end by the researcher. Due to time constraints and taking into consideration the purpose of this meeting it was a relevant time to verbally summarise and agree a date for the researcher to forward a written report (developed in collaboration with the rapporteur) with the potential mechanisms to move forwards outlined to

senior management at EitC. This would help furnish a future planned meeting for EitC senior management to specifically identify a change strategy.

Collaborative action research involved interaction between the researcher and the researched (Tinning, 1992; McFee, 1993). The focus group developed within Study 2 Part I, provided a platform to disseminate key research findings to senior management with EitC and begin to explore and consider meaningful ways to improve practice. The author provided senior management with a report of the focus group (see Appendix H). This was to support the process senior management sharing, reflecting and indentifying (the scale, scope and potential impact of) actions (McFee, 1993; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; Reason and Bradbury, 2001). Within the following section (Study 2, Part II), senior management were invited to an *action meeting* to discuss the report and identify actions or mechanisms to move forward.

4.9. Study 2, Part II: Aims and methodology: action planning

Aim 2: Action Planning: In collaboration with senior management with EitC reflect on the effectiveness of the results from the reconnaissance phase with a view to creating meaningful and positive actions (or ways forward) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.

Objective 2: Action Planning:

- I. To develop a dissemination event for senior management within EitC to feedback findings from the reconnaissance phase and generate meaningful ways forward (or actions) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.
- II. To collate and distribute potential actions before hosting an action meeting to discuss and confirm plausible ways forward.**

4.10. Introduction

Action research does by nature involve collaboration between the researcher and the researched (Tinning, 1992; McFee, 1993) and is certainly seen as a group process rather than that a pursuit undertaken in isolation. In line with the action research process, following the extensive reconnaissance phase of Study 1 and Part I of Study 2 (i.e., focus group with EitC senior management) the aim of Part II Study 2 was to encourage a senior management to target an explicit change strategy. This would involve identifying, engaging and reflecting on a potential action before committing to a change strategy. In essence, the process of action research and facilitating the creation of social change through active collaboration between academia and society was seen as a genuine and valid approach (Greenwood and Levin, 200; p94).

Involvement in a collaborative action research project requires a commitment to democratic social change. The action research process rejects the notion of an objective, value-free approach to knowledge generation in favour of an explicitly political, socially engaged, and democratic practice (Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003). A key value shared by action researchers, then, is this abiding respect for people's knowledge and for their ability to understand and address the

issues confronting them and their communities or environment. The task should be to facilitate support and resources for people to do things in ways that will fit their own cultural context and environment. The people (i.e., participants) should be the ones to determine the nature and operation of the things that affected their lives (Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003). Concerning, working in collaboration with others Kasl and Yorks (2002, p. 16) describe that participants 'grew to appreciate how their interrelatedness created a power greater than a sum of individual powers'. This echoes the importance of working collaboratively within action research. Following the initial focus groups (Part I, Study 2) and the proceeding report (see Appendix H), senior management (n=2) were invited to attend an *action* meeting with the researcher and a senior colleague. The purpose of this meeting was to build upon and explore the discussion created within the focus group. The senior colleague was also the rapporteur from the focus group to support consistency in the research process and familiarity with the data. This process allowed for senior managers to define their own personal objectives and pool their knowledge and understanding of both the reconnaissance findings and their environment to apply what is learned to create social change (Greenwood and Levin, 2000). Within this process senior management were encouraged to share, reflect and indentify (the scale, scope and potential impact of) actions or mechanisms to move forward (McFee, 1993; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; Reason and Bradbury, 2001). The findings from both the reconnaissance phase (Study 1) and the focus group (Part II Study 2) informed the decision making processes made throughout this action meeting. This action research process is outlined below in Figure 3.1.

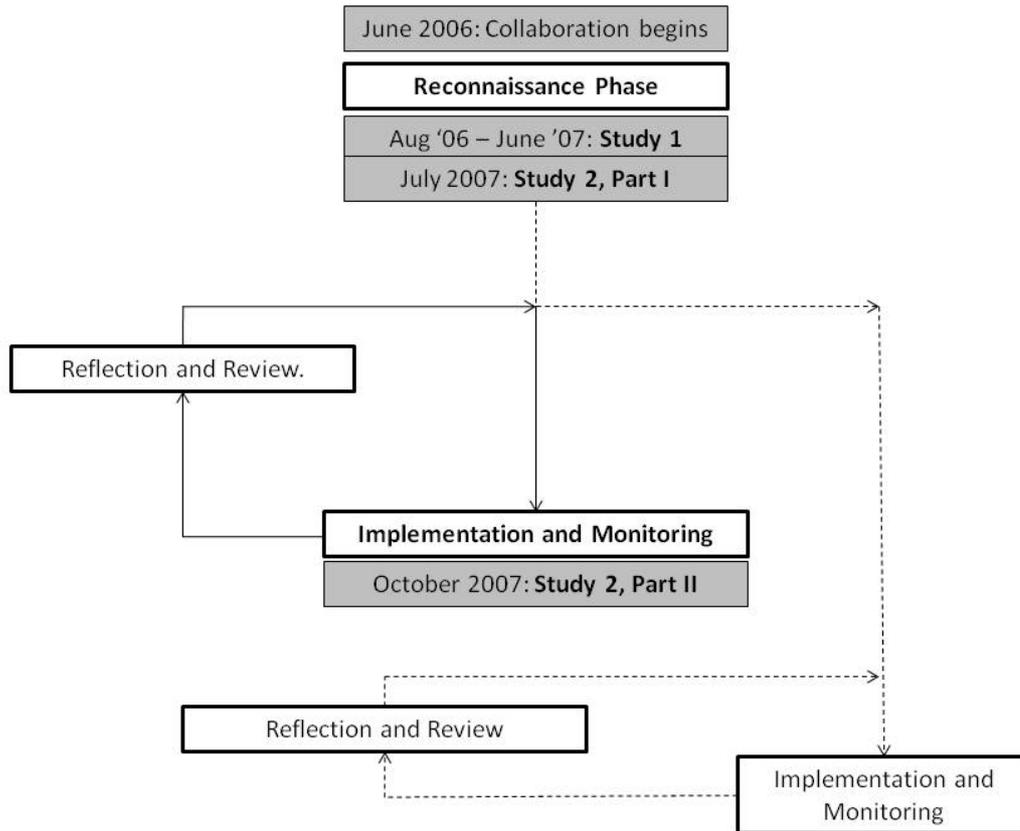


Figure 4.1. The action research cycle in relation to this research study.

4.11. Analysis

Senior management from EitC were provided with a summary of the focus group session (in Study 2, Part I) with a view to revisiting and using in preparation for the action meeting. The action meeting was recorded using a Dictaphone. This data was transcribed verbatim and used alongside the summary notes from the researcher and rapporteur to provide a summary of the change strategy to the participants within a week of the action meeting taking place (see Appendix I).

To capture the responses of senior management from with the action meeting the summary notes (developed between the facilitator and rapporteur) were used alongside the synthesis of the verbatim citations (see Lederman, 1990 As in Study 2, Part I the pertinent issues relating to the participants have been identified in **bold type set**. It was appropriate to present this action

meeting utilising the participants own voice verbatim allowing for detailed insight into decision making process involved with agreeing a change strategy within a reflective meeting. Finally, as in Study 1 reflective 'stop offs', field note extracts and the researcher's personal reflections are evidenced as indented, single spaced lines and a smaller font (.10) within the text.

4.12. Results

The action meeting took place on the 16th October 2007 at Goodison Park (the home of Everton Football Club) in an executive box. Both members of the senior management team from EitC attended; Peter and Gary. The following text outlines the discussion from the 1hr 16minute action meeting detailing the process to agree a change strategy.

PC: I think in terms of the report, it outlined much of what we discussed last time, which was great from our point of view and although it was surprising in some of the areas, we do take it on board. **We want to get better and this is an ideal opportunity to do that and now look at how we take it forward.**

DP: Is there anything that has really stood out as something you would like to take forward?

PC: Certainly, from our point of view and having spoken to Gary about this was that **quality assurance was an interesting area to look at and try and develop. Such as processes to stop staff from being late.**

DP: Is that the main action you wish to take forward?

PC: I think for me and the majority of issues that came out of that [the report], that was the big issue for me. To have a look at that in more detail.

DP: Was there anything else since the meeting that has changed or anything that you have reacted to already?

PC: I think we have reacted in a number of ways already. **But first and foremost, we have had consultation with coaches concerning one or two of the areas already. Things that we have raised without naming names blah, blah, blah.** I think it has made the staff stand up and be counted and think about and there is certain ways of doing things within the programmes. It was hard speaking to the staff without giving away too much in terms of...from the meeting without it having an impact on you and you specifically. Obviously the staff know you and know that this is a programme that has been going on. **Although that wasn't necessarily difficult it was awkward to be fair.**

DP: So how did you put this across to the staff, as results from the project?

PC: **No we didn't actually mention the project. It was more of a point of view from a general observation. I have been out and about and watching the staff, I wanted to make it look like it was coming from me rather than from you and the research. You might tell me otherwise I don't know.** [Peter laughs looking at Gary]

GJ: **There was a level of...[pause] resentment, no that's not the right word. And not distrust, but they [the coaches] were dubious perhaps was more the word, of your role.** They grouped together quite quickly around what you was doing, which didn't bode well for Danny. **So instantly, it was like you was an auditor.** They weren't fearful of what we were doing, but they were conscious of some many sweeping changes, so we [Peter and Gary] has to manage that process so that continued not to damage your reputation. Does that make sense?

DP: Yes...

GJ: I imagine that being harsh, **but I think dubious is the right word around what people were thinking.** [pause]....

Whilst there certainly was not anything that would stop EitC senior management from divulging this information with the coaching team, following the focus group meeting it was clear the researcher would play a role in facilitating any change strategy moving forward. This revelation at this point raised some concern over the future role of the researcher operating as an 'insider' within EitC.

Reflective 'stop-off'

Being an insider

I was left a little in shock at this at the beginning of the meeting. What were they thinking going straight back to the coaches, in what appears to be a crude and brash approach? Without agreeing a change strategy! My gut feeling at this point, surrounded the fact I had spent over a year within EitC building a relationships and a rapport with coaches, practitioners and staff, all of which could have been un-done in a knee jerk reaction to the reality of practice fed back within the focus groups.

Gary himself said 'It doesn't need to be couched as a Danny Parnell, LJMU thing...we almost need to say...but they wouldn't know where this has come from...and by no means to put you in a position...'. It appears this may have undermined you, my relationships and my role within the research.

I had a sense within the focus groups (which DR shared) regarding the senior management desire and intention to react by sacking (dismissing) those involved, as opposed to accepting some responsibility for evidence suggesting poor working practice.

Their approach at this point seemed a little heavy and smells a little bit like a scare mongering management tactic. Maybe I should have been more explicit about the ideal AR process. I was happy at this point to sit back in the action meeting and just listen to Peter and Gary and consider my next steps to build any broken bridges with the team and my friends at EitC.

GJ:I will continue there a second. The report is everything we talked about when we last met. I think what we have to do and I read it twice. **And once in preparation for this and I thought this is about possibly...two years too soon for us to implement a lot**

of this. That might sound harsh, but given I have only been here 18 months, we had a ship that was almost on the rocks. You know it was smashed, you know Dave what it was like? **This is where I would like to be [implementing positive changes] but we have got the ship off the rocks, we have got two sails fixed, we have got some direction and we are moving fast.** This is almost the icing on the cake. This is where Peter and I want to be and where the staff want to be. This was not damning but quite harsh. What I think you have to do is take away much of the harshness and think about that much of what we do, is not always measureable. So the elements that Peter mentioned about the staff are measurable. But they are staffing issues. **Coaches that come from very much coach backgrounds and not coaches from high level academic backgrounds, therefore there is a responsiveness difference to the coach.** You can't expect somebody to work at the level and have an impact consistently the way we would expect. This report would outline that we have fantastic staff and these are the conditions we work to. **I don't think that we have the environment whereby staff will be fully conversant with this type of report [the detailed natured report concerning working practice of the coaches].** But we should be striving for that, or as close to it with the staff that we have got.

PC: Umm.

GJ: For me, it wasn't the effectiveness of the staff. That was a difficult one. For me it was the way the staff behaved, which touches on what Peter mentioned. It was the showing up late.

PC: Yeah.

The priorities are interesting and focus on being on time and quality assurance rather than the children's experiences and/or the programme outcomes. Gary uses the analogy of EitC being a 'ship' and that management in the past has left the ship smashed against the rocks, so EitC are in a relatively bad place. Gary reflects and offers a genuine acceptance that some of the potential actions (albeit it needed) may be too soon for EitC. In his words he has moved EitC off the rocks and he has 'two sails fixed'. Importantly, he notes that EitC has some direction but they are moving fast in terms of growth in the business. Whilst Gary would like to implement many (if not all) of these actions, the reality of existence, real world practice suggests he or perhaps more so his team (including coaches) are not ready or equipped with the necessary skills for some of the proposed actions. It seems that they wish to focus the more basic, pragmatic, fundamental, and perhaps more realistic and achievable, actions first.

GJ: We have just done a new deal with Liverpool School Sports Partnerships and quality assurance was big within that deal. Many of the issues with staff not showing up, or what do they do, how do they do it, how do they deliver are within

this. And that's where we are looking to monitor and evaluate the staff. On this new LSSP deal. Because I am being challenged now, as we have 25 new staff all badged [branded] up under this LSSP. What the hell are they doing when they are out there [coaching]? How are they representing our brand (EitC) and monitoring and evaluating outcomes? Well, how do we know where they are when they should be? Well, Danny's mentioned this here [in the report], so we have taken, not verbatim, but we have mentioned and recognised the connect [the link]. We haven't specifically said, 'Danny said that so...we are going to apply that...'. It comes back to our overall evaluation of how we are running our business as well. **And this will reinforce that. I think I had to pull out what I could and say 'Ok', there is not a chance I can deal with that. I would love all my staff in two years to be like that, but we are just too far away. Maybe two years is too harsh, but maybe a year is more realistic.**

PC: Yeh.

GJ: **Our goal of getting this is not with our current staff that we have particularly.**

PC: Yeh.

GJ: **For me, all the incoming staff, who haven't picked up all the old habits...**

PC: Yep. [GJ laughs]

GJ: Now the old habits are a lot less than what they were when I arrived, but...

PC: Yep.

GJ: **...the staff we have in this environment, pretty much working to where we want them to be. Is that fair to say?**

PC: Yeh.

GJ: **But the new staff coming in, I want another level.** That will force the older staff, now there are only a few of them...

PC: Yeah.

GJ: **To come through on the wave of the new staff, which we have. Which is 25. So we have 25 chances of getting it right and this forms part of that.**

Gary and Peter appear to be accepting that their existing coaching staff simply do not have the skill base to deliver on the work and business that EitC are moving into. Their focus in this regard, is on ensuring new staff are the right staff.

The discussion surrounds Everton Football Clubs and EitC's partnership with the Liverpool School Sport Partnership. This partnership involves funding from education and Liverpool Active City to support 25 new coaches, employed via Everton Football Club and deployed by Everton in the Community in partnership with Liverpool School Sport Partnership. It is worth recognising at this point that EitC share the Human Resource function of Everton Football Club.

GJ: Their [new LSSP coaches] target is participation. Wouldn't you say Peter?

PC: I think from the coaches we have now [those involved in the research], not the new coaches. The aim for them is to engage at a grassroots level via football plus other activities. This is the current coaches, not the new coaches the LSSP coaches. Their [the new LSSP coaches] remit is more structured about going into schools delivering multi-skills activities, which each primary school requests.

GJ: What we have to remember to do is that we don't now run a school like we did anymore. **We have lots of different school activities, but we no longer drop into a school with cones and a bag of balls. We don't have that now.** We are going into schools now with the LSSP where they [the coaches] have a specific remit handed down from the four PDMs (LSSP, Partnership Development Managers) and that's how we are engaging schools. **We don't charge them to go into schools [this is now funded]. And that was the bulk of community business going back however many years you want to go back.** It's no longer the business. We actually even now, I received business cards from schools in Knowsley, which I haven't handed to Peter yet, but looking round the staff I am thinking who can I give this business card to. They said can you have a coach contact us. **Actually, every coach we have now is primed to do what they do when they do it. And it's funded to do those things.** We don't have someone who is funded to go into and liaise with schools. Why would we need to have that? Well, we need it because we are being handed business cards and schools are saying we want you to come and work with us. And some of these are specialised schools and they have funding for a programme. **And that would have a particular outcome as well. So the business had changed a little even since this has been done.** All of our schools coaches are the LSSP coaches. They work to the agenda of the four PDMs which control the City in terms of sport.

Throughout the action meeting much of the discussion by Gary and Peter appears contradictory.

In the first instance, Gary explains that they have no school activity, although EitC still do a lot of work in schools. He now shifts all school based activity by EitC on to the new LSSP coaches, who appear to be controlled by the PDMs (and not EitC), potentially meaning that any change strategy involving these new coaches is out of the control of Gary and Peter.

DP: **So with the LSSP coaches, will the PDM give them a structure to deliver?**

GJ: **Yeah, but we are doing our quality assurance.**

PC: **It won't be the PDMs alone, we will have an impact and an input. It's going to be more the Primary Link Teachers that coordinate what the coaches actually do in the schools.** It is all dependent on what the schools want. Some schools might want trampolining, as opposed to tag rugby. So it's really around those areas, as opposed to... Well each cluster of primary schools will have a set programme, but it all depends on what the schools, the primary link teachers want via the SSCos (School Sport Coordinators) want to link that in with.

On this simple question regarding whether the new LSSP coaches will receive a structured delivery plan, Gary says “Yes”, but EitC will complete the quality assurance. This is supported by Peter who defensively adds that EitC will have an input. Going on to explain that it’s the schools, then the primary link teachers (a primary school link teacher responsible for sport within the LSSP), then the school sports coordinators (a link teacher in a high school responsible for working with the primary link teachers in a cluster of primary schools and with the PDM) responsibility to decide on the programme. This lack of clarity continues throughout the action meeting on the subject of the LSSP coaches.

Conversation moves again towards the LSSP coaches and their delivery plan within schools.

GJ: It’s multi-sport yeah. We have two academy guys [Everton Football Club Academy members of staff, as part of the performance arm of the Club] who will be monitoring and evaluating what the coaches do and when they do it. That’s two of them split between the four quadrants of the City [at the time, neighbourhood areas that divide the city].

PC: Yeah.

GJ: **So we are addressing some of this, by saying they [the coaches] are out there delivering quick cricket, but what plan are they working to. What’s the baseline, the delivery and the outcome. So those children learnt something in those 6, 10 weeks.** And that’s what we are looking at, so we do want to see lesson plans.

DR: **There are a couple of things for me, first off is what do you understand by quality assurance? There is a difficulty there of what it is that you could actually do in terms of providing that. The other question revolved the academy coaches observing, as a quality assurance mechanism, what I would call, a more process and fun oriented environment.**

GJ: The first one, on the academy level that is simply a resource. They work within the academy, but these are guys that have come right through the system and because the academy is looking at all levels of ability in all different sports, they are not actually look at it as a ‘what are you teaching and to what ability’. **What they are looking at is the general quality assurance, so we use them as a resource rather than because they are the academy. They could have come from anywhere.**

DR: **I guess it’s because their predominant lens is performance rather than say multi-skills...**

Conversation continues on the role and perception of academy coaches entering primary schools and quality assuring community coaches. Particular concerns surround the performance lens often adopted by academy coaches and the process and fun oriented lens required by community coaches. The role of the researcher moving forward was also mentioned, as a means to offering this process a fun/enjoyment perspective with

the academy coaches in the development of any quality assurance model. Gary also highlights that the LSSP PDMs are concerned that this is simply a talent identification process. We pick the conversation back up on Gary's take on quality assurance...

GJ: We are making sure, that basically when these coaches, when they are out there in the Everton brand. That somebody is not out there in a ripped Everton shirt, smelling of alcohol, showing up late...

PC: ...on their phone.

GJ: ...on their phone, while they are coaching and generally not flirting with the teacher. It's all those things that these guys [the two academy quality assurance] are coming in to do [check], but whilst they are doing that, they can build the relationship with the school, as they now have a point of contact. As the pond shrinks for academy spotting or scouting, this actually opens up a pond to them. If you like, that they further view people and have access to.

The use of the two academy coaches for quality assurance has stemmed from the club funding the academy coaches to complete this. Whilst Gary has reassured us that this is not a talent identification process, he does allude to the opportunities this provides the academy coaches in terms of building relationships with the schools, whilst doing some basic 'quality assurance' checks on the coaches.

DP: With the LSSP coaches, do you want to just check things are ok?

GL: Well yes, it can't be more than that. Like I said with the report, this is too deep for us. We have only just got to this point. Am I being unfair here?

PC: It's a fair reflection of where we are now. Certainly, from where we have come from, it's a massive leap forward. But there is still space to take this forward. I know you have asked us about what we think, but from your perspective as the researcher, is there any obvious areas that you would like to take forward?

DP: It is more about what you want to do. It has to be something that you want, that you will drive and give time to.

GJ: That's almost what I am suggesting, I am being realistic. If we can take from this, what we know we can implement successfully, rather than saying let's make our guys....you know, how deep is quality assurance? How deep do you want to go? It is at this point, the basics of quality assurance. If we get that right then we move a step up. Our guys [coaches] are happy to be challenged on the basics, but they are coaches. We are having difficulty in explaining the requirement of stats. If you say stats, we need stats, they understand. But they don't understand what we do with them. Handing them in on time, the collection of it, all of those things are becoming issues. So we are only one step away from very baseline here, that's why I say this is a process. And I think we almost need to break this down into processes. And you have almost said that when you say 'Well, what is it?' **I think if we jump too high, we are going to spend**

more time on this, and scare off the really good people, and we have seen it happen. They become administrative more than anything more than deliverers. That's the fine line we have. And I have had to back off on some of my expectations, so much so that we now hire.

Gary tells a lengthy analogy about using EitC activity within primary schools to build relationships to 'get bums on seats' during Everton Football Clubs games. He reinforces this is not a ticket touting activity, but merely providing children with the opportunity to have the Premiership experience.

GJ: All the user groups we have, we have to coach because we are funded to coach them. There are distinct differences between the coaches from what the community department was a couple of years ago when I arrived. That's happening across the league [English Premier League] slowly, but it's happening here rapidly. And this report for me highlight those fundamental needs but at what level. We are not going to be a fully audited organisation for me, for two years. But we are, by this report alone we are more advanced than what we were, by the brain training we are more advanced than what we were, by the healthy school bus and by...well we are moving ahead. All of these processes apply to these, but it's picking out which ones we can actually do. For me it's the fundamentals that we need to do. It's not the detailed, detailed that we need, it's the basic, so if we can get that right. That's why I can see this being a lengthy process for our relationship here to grow.

Gary and Peter are essentially outlining that they can only focus on very basics 'checks' involved in quality assurance. They recognise that the Department has improved since Gary's arrival and that the English Premier League community programmes are all undergoing change, but in his opinion not as quick as EitC.

PC: You mentioned contracts too, which was interesting. The contract between the school and EitC, which would be an area for me to look at how we could do that effectively, so everyone knows what they are doing when they go out to the schools. Which links to the conversation we had last time [within the focus group].

DP: Is that with the LSSP coaches or?

PC: That is for everybody. The LSSP coaches are everybody.

GJ: But there are nuances between the two user groups now [EitC coaches and new LSSP coaches]. I don't mean the user groups that we engage with but much of our work now has group coordinators, LSSP coaches, they are all funded differently and they are all requiring a whole different thing now. If we had just sat down and said nothing, we would have had an easy life. We would have changed those couple of things, but we have put ourselves on a pedestal. We have created so many divisions and we are expecting these LSSP coaches to move up to forty?? quite quickly. We are also putting a plan in to develop coaches that purely come in and go in to schools and coach and go to different user groups and coach for free. Funded by the Club. On the back of that, they [the coaches] have to generate income, through charging or through ticket sales. That sounds like we are becoming ticket touts, but we are not. We are saying, 'You have enjoyed the coaching, now enjoy the Premiership experience'. And

we are doing that in our preparation for our move to Knowsley [Everton FC's proposed stadium move]. So looking at the key groups. So what it is doing is really, bringing on user groups that have never been known to community football at this level, and we know that, because we are getting this from key people around the business. Not this business of football.

Gary is trying to make the point that they [EitC, Peter and himself] do not need to do this. They would still be 'OK' if they just carried on as normal. Again Gary has contradicted what has previously been said regarding having no schools coaching programme and that they will not charge. The emergence of the clubs influence on the decision making process of both Gary and Peter is also evident, in terms of ticket sales and potential stadium moves.

DP: I suppose you have to be sure given all the new coaching arrivals, once you have the mechanics of arriving on time, dressed correctly and having a good manner. What are they delivering?

GJ: **I would say that's part of the basics. Can someone come in now and say 'You have been to a school for 10 weeks, I want to see 10 weeks of session plans'. If they can get to that point, I would be much happier** than a massive amount of detail. If we can get to that, once we get them [the coaches] used to that we can get them used to the next step.

PC: I think we can include stats in that also.

GJ: Absolutely.

PC: Which Gary has mentioned already. And certainly feedback from the teachers, in terms of whether they think a child has improved in whatever is being delivered at the time.

DP: Is there anything else going on already with the LSSP in terms of lesson plans and does it come to you?

PC: **Currently, we have mentioned about lesson plans, but for all coaches. But at this moment in time, its the PDMs and SSCos that are line managing those multi-skills coaches 'in the field'**. But it will be up to us to ensure the lesson plans are in place.

GJ: That's the difficulty of these multiple user groups or partnerships. **The LSSP are our employees, so in actual fact we need to go through Susan and Geoff [PDMs] and give them some ownership as well.** We can't enforce our will on them, that will come in time. I won't say we are enforcing our will, but I will see we are working together in partnership. We are at the beginning of a partnership and we are only just now beginning to understand what those roles are. **Ultimately, we will want the same as them and they will want the same as us in terms of lesson plans. Are they all doing it? No. Should they be? Yes. Are we going to get there soon? We need to. Because we need to understand that the quality assurance is there. If something happens, they are not going to call Susan or Geoff, they are going to call the badge [Everton].** They

are going to call us and say your coach did or didn't do this...**If we can't back it up with evidence then they have every right to say we have done nothing...we have to be able to prove that, show that we have done something and that's the basic of it that is in your report.** But it's then taking away the other high level stuff and coming down to that. **How you fit into that moving forward? How do you facilitate that? And that's where we are looking at the role of DP [Dan Parnell, the researcher] within this. How we do that and protect your integrity so that coaches see that as a plus.** Well if they heard what we just said, then they would say 'well this is not here to hurt us'. We haven't got to that point yet, **but certainly some of the LSSP staff would find this quite [Gary sits back] 'wow wow wow we are coaches here', [Gary simulates responding to them] 'well you might be, but your now working for a brand that gives a dam'.** You are going to be coaches that are better than the average coach, if you don't want that, then go and work for progress sports or someone because we are just not going to accept it. And that's been a process for us, that has only taken 18 months to get to.

Reflective 'stop-off'

The reality of football

At this point I realised that these chaps were operating at the normal level. The art of day-to-day existence. This appeared to involve the genuine insight into the complexity of managing multiple stakeholders and resource issue to achieve their goals, alongside an awful lot of over fabricated management talk with no real clarity. I had concerns the management team really understood how to move this forward. This echoes the lack of success, in managing change and improvement in the performance side of the English Premier League.

An improved Department it may be since Gary's arrived, but operating anywhere near where it should to justify the social funding it receives, I think not. Worryingly, I would probably agree with Gary. Every club's community programme in the English Premier League is undergoing huge changes and EitC are at the front of this. Winning awards, building fantastic partnerships and being invited to share best practice across on national platforms. This probably says a lot about the state and need for action in community football..

I was left knowing what I wanted to EitC to do. I felt I knew what 'they' could do. But this was not my call, this was ultimately their change. I had to figure out how I can help them and what my role was going to be.

The tempo of discussion towards a specific action has certainly propelled at this point, however the conversation has navigated the potential change strategy towards the LSSP coaches. Whilst these new coaches are technically EitC coaches, they were not part of the research and not the coaches involved in the reconnaissance phase. Any potential change strategy had to impact 'home' within EitC with the coaches the research was developed with. With this, the change strategy took the form of a quality assurance model with the LSSP coaches. There appeared to be a lack of clarity over who's responsibility the LSSP coaches were under, which raised concerned over the feasibility of the change strategy.

GJ: It absolutely is, in some way shape or form. That's why I feel there is some role for us to play here as a group, in terms, of talking and announcing Danny as a person coming in to do this. Not as a 'Big Brother' or an auditor, he's actually coming in to do this because

this is the way the business is going and you are expected to be able to work with him and equally **that's how we would have to sell it to the PDMs**. Even though you are known to them [DP is known to the PDMs through his coaching practice across Liverpool], they will see this and know we have had a Danny. We have actually had where they [the PDMs] have said 'You, EFC are trying to impose your will on us, so are just going to say, 'No'. They say 'No' just because they want to.... Anything we can do to break down what you [DP] and DR said, we must do. In bringing them all together and helping them [academy and PDMs] understand what we want to achieve.

The discussion covered the importance of working collaboratively with partners and adopting an inclusive approach to the development of a quality assurance model. Gary also appeared keen to ensure the role of DP was clear moving forward and would ensure this would reflect will with the EitC stressing its importance to the business.

4.13. Summary and action

Despite the evidence for change, at times some comments by Gary suggest that despite the talk of moving forward, he still is not prepared to prioritise this for EitC. Given the growth EitC were experiencing, as outlined by Gary, the urgency must be on getting things right on the ground within coaching practice. To put this in his terminology, that's where his current 'fire' (i.e., a reactive stance) was. How prepared is he to put this one out? The formal action meeting was brought to an end, as conversation continued onto other EitC projects. The summary report of the meeting is included in Appendix I. However, the main findings from the action meeting are detailed below.

The initial discussion recognised that there was a need to improve practice. It was highlighted that from the report it seemed clear that quality assurance (QA) would be an ideal way to take things forward on a coaching level and a business level. It was recognised that whilst there was other issues raised in DP's report that EitC would certainly want to act upon, the climate at which EitC are now in does not at present permit such sweeping reform.

The discussion then focused on the how to take QA forward. It was highlighted that the 25 new Liverpool School Sport Partnership (LSSP) coaches would be the primary focus of QA. It was noted that the QA that would be implemented should not necessarily be focused on the effectiveness of the coaches, but use a two-tier approach to QA. It was recognised that one part of the approach would consist of the mechanics, and pragmatics of the coach, including the quantifiable and measurable aspect. The other tier would be the evaluation of the actual coaching practice.

It was highlighted that two Everton Football Club Academy coaches have been tasked to quality assure the new LSSP coaches. Concerns were raised over the 'performance oriented lens' that the academy coaches could adopt when observing the mainly 'process oriented' LSSP coaches (which was also the concerns expressed by the partnership development managers). However, it was maintained that these coaches were experienced and informed in observation of coaches at a community level.

It was highlighted that DP's role would be to help and inform the academy coaches and facilitate meetings between them, myself and Peter Conn. It was noted that the development of a QA model of observation would be specifically attractive. Additionally, it was recognised that it may be useful to have myself and an experienced EitC coach involved. This would also help reduced fears within the LSSP that the coaches would be wrongly quality assured (via the academy coaches adopting a performance oriented lens).

It was recognised from the meeting that a clear understanding of what the LSSP coaches are currently doing and what they currently being asked to do must be ascertained. With this there must be clarity with the PDM, with regards to QA and it was highlighted that there was a need to have them 'on board'.

It was suggested that staff would be informed of DP's role, in facilitating the development of a QA model. It was documented that DP's role at the club could be announced, as the club's

approach to develop QA throughout all business levels and that this is a staff development initiative to protect the coaches. With this it was suggested that it may be useful for me to present some results from Study 1, with regards to physical activity levels and positive elements of practice. PC role in this will be act as the supervisor of the QA team to bring everyone involved together and to ensure that plans of action are met.

Action: DP and PC meet to build a plan for the implementation of the QA framework.

CHAPTER 5

STUDY 3: Implementation and Monitoring Phase

Chapter 5, Study 3

Aim 3: Implementation and Monitoring Phase: Facilitate senior management in managing positive change within and across the organisation.

Objective:

V. Act as facilitator for senior management in managing the change strategy across the organisation.

5.0. Study 3: Aims and methodology

The following aims will be addressed within Study 3:

- (e) Act as facilitator for senior management in managing the change strategy across the organisation.**

5.1. Introduction

The process of action research involves a spiral of self-reflective cycles that include; “...planning the change, acting and observing the process and consequences of change, reflecting on these processes and consequences, and then re-planning, acting and observing, reflecting, and so on...” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000, p595). These cyclical stages of reconnaissance, planning, observation and reflection make up the action research process (Elliot, 1991). Alongside the notions of action research (i.e., to focus on solving real problems), participants were encouraged to identify issues or problems and develop and choose a specific mechanism to move forward and address the issue (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). The process of action research and facilitating the creation of social change through active collaboration between academia and society was seen as a genuine and valid approach (Greenwood and Levin, 2000). These changes were addressed in Study 2 Part I and Part II. Study 2 Part II finished with senior management and the author agreeing the following action:

- Dan Parnell and Peter Conn [EitC senior manager] meet to build a plan for the implementation of the Quality Assurance framework.

Involvement in a collaborative action research project requires a commitment to democratic social change (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). A key value shared by action researchers, then, is this abiding respect for people’s knowledge and for their ability to understand and address the issues confronting them and their communities or environment. The task should be to facilitate,

support and offer a resource for people to do things in ways that will fit their own cultural context and environment. The people (i.e., participants) should be the ones to determine the nature and operation of the things that affect their lives (Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003). Kasl and Yorks (2002) stated that when working in collaboration with others we are able to achieve the most, with participants in their work stating that they “grew to appreciate how their interrelatedness created a power greater than a sum of individual powers” (2002, p. 16). Once appropriate action has been identified and agreed (i.e., by the participants and researcher) then the role of the researcher becomes one of supporting and facilitating the change strategy chosen by the participants (i.e., the senior management). According to Greenwood and Levin (2000) the real test for social research is whether this process can support coaches, practitioners, organisations and/or communities in their process of self-determining social change.

5.2. Methodological approach, ethnography

Research has raised questions over whether those collecting research wish to stay in the ‘comfort zone’ of interview and content analysis or whether new qualitative approaches could be explored (Biddle et al., 2001). The role of the ethnographer has been advocated given its flexibility in research design enabling creativity in finding the best strategies to answer research questions (Krane and Baird, 2005). Moreover, qualitative researchers have been challenged to broaden narrative strategies used in research and open up space in social science texts for a more engaged understanding of the organisations, characters and lives which we observe (Tierney, 2002). This research adopts a longitudinal ethnographic perspective continuing and building upon the ethnographic work undertaken within Study 1. Thus allowing the author to feel, sense and even (perhaps) understand the culture, environment and decision making processes undertaken by coaches, staff and senior management with EitC (Wolcott, 1995; Tedlock, 2000). As action research involves change within working practice, ethnography is particularly useful in helping

researchers immerse themselves within controversial or sensitive issues through a closeness that would support a rapport whereby dialogue, honesty, disclosure and behaviours would not ordinarily be observed (Krane and Baird, 2005). Tedlock (2002) summarised the ethnographic process:

“...by entering into the close and relatively prolonged interaction with people... in their everyday lives, ethnographers can better understand the beliefs, motivations and behaviours of their subjects...” p456.

In essence, the author becomes immersed within the data stretching epistemological and methodological boundaries to satisfy an area of research needed in applied work, community football development and management. Within this study, the author engages in formal ‘reflection and development’ meetings with the participants (i.e., EitC senior management and coaches) and broader ethnographic engagement within EitC. With this, the emphasis is on ‘action’, which is inextricably linked to reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000). This critical approach allows reflection (of a systematic kind) to enable the participants to improve practice within the workplace (Gilbourne, 2001). Typically the meetings were not recorded with a Dictaphone, although some more formal meetings were. The researcher adopted an exploratory and empathic listener approach espoused by (Rogers, 1991), but remained true to the facilitator role of action research. In this regard, the research used opportunities to clarify change strategy (i.e., ideal), revisit the purpose or aim of social change, recount the implementation process of change, the benefits and barriers to change (i.e., personal, internal, external), personal feelings related to change, to develop, review or refine the process of change (i.e., operational or strategic) or to develop a new change strategy. As in Study 1, participant observation was utilised in a variety of settings throughout the study (Lofland and Lofland, 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 and Tedlock, 2000), to balance the notions of engagement and trust, whilst adopting an (initially) objective lens, the researcher then actively engaged in both observation and participation and participant-observation (Hong and Duff, 2002). The researcher’s personal reflections and observations were recorded through informal field notes and a reflective diary.

Informal field notes were continually developed to capture the context, culture and practice of EitC (McFee, 1992; Krane & Baird, 2005). When a more flexible method of data collection was needed (e.g., note taking may jeopardise the quality of conversation) mental notes were made (as utilised by Atkinson, 1981). These mental notes where typical key words and quotes from participants (i.e., EitC coaches and senior management) where jotted on a pad and developed at the end of the day in detailed reflective field notes (consistent with Lofland, 1995).

These narratives are presented through a chronological approach following the action meeting (Study 2, Part II) and detail a series of collaborative case study cycles that attempt to highlight the distinct action research cycles (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Verbatim citations provide detailed insight into the working practices of the participants (including barriers and self reflections) during the process of change.

5.3. Entry (or re-entry)

Gaining entry is critical for ethnographers, to develop trust and rapport (Le Compt and Schensul, 1991). Study 1 provided the author with the time and scope to become an ethnographic ‘insider’ or member of a culture (i.e., EitC) (Lofland, 2000). However, within Study 2 and the apparent disclosures by senior management to the EitC coaches raised concerns over whether the strength of the rapport built between the researcher and EitC coaching staff during Study 1 was still present, it had certainly been risked and threatened. The author’s initial ethnographic engagement finished in June 2007 and the author did not re-enter EitC until 22 November 2007 (5 month period of dis-engagement). Entering this phase of the research a major strength should have been the rapport built. The author approached Study 3 as an ethnographic ‘outsider’, but who has the privileges, relationships, acceptance, opportunities and a degree of knowledge of an ethnographer ‘insider’ (Lofland, 2000; Wheaton, 2000). The author sought to ensure this rapport was re-affirmed or re-established with EitC coaches and support

staff as soon as possible through adopting an understanding, sincere, empathic approach, breaking down barriers to communication, developing a common ground and supporting with EitC operations (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). Building upon Study 2, facilitation stimulates and supports the participants' change strategy (Greenwood and Levin, 2000).

5.4. Recording observations and interactions

Observation is the key tool adopted within the ethnographic process, and can be described as taking mental notes with a wide angle lens (Spradley, 1980; Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). In this regard, the researcher had to build a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the participants' (and my own) experiences as they happen (Lofland, 1996; Schensul, Schensul and LeCompt, 1999; Tedlock, 2000) via participating within daily activities of the group (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Whilst, not an employed member of staff, the author (and researcher) had extensive experience and prior extensive engagement within the working practice of EitC. Here the author developed a detailed understanding of the coaches, staff, senior management, and environment by adopting both a wide and focused lens (as discussed in Krane and Baird, 2005). This ethnographic record can be developed via a variety of techniques. The following section details the techniques employed by the author to develop a rich ethnographic record.

Note taking was used each day either in evenings or post meetings/interactions and not necessarily during interactions and meetings. These notes were made from memory and include accounts of observations, descriptions, interactions and conversations (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). Notes were then elaborated and further reflections were made on the research process, based on my personal behaviours and my feelings about EitC (Sparkes, 1995; 2002; Krane and Baird, 2005). Much of the content within the notes was derived from formal, informal, structured or unstructured conversations and interactions with EitC senior management and coaches. Where possible the notes sought to contain and capture the words, verbatim, and

context of the participants' situation to support the development of rich contextual accounts. In line with Krane and Baird (2005), note taking was completed within 24 hours of the event wherever feasible.

5.5. Representation

It has been highlighted that the (researcher as) author must recognise and hence represent the human being in a multiple strata of reality, which may be organised in different ways (Tedlock, 2000). Tedlock (2000) went on to state that ethnography is a process and a product, ethnographers' lives are embedded within the field experiences in such a way that all their interactions involve moral choices, that the experience is meaningful, and that subsequent outcomes are generated from and informed by this meaningfulness. Although, the story developed is ultimately the author's tale of the 'self' (i.e., 'I') and the 'other', it is important that the 'self' does not dominate the text unnecessarily. Tierney (2002) suggested that whilst the text should be biographically positioned, so that the author's stance is clear, the concern for a particular phenomena, people or ideas should not be neglected. It has been recommended that the author should emerge where appropriate to move the story along (Polkinghorne, 2007). The shift from participant observation to the observation of participation enables the researcher-cum-author to present both the *self* and the *other* and the emotions of the ethnographic experience (Tedlock, 2000). This process legitimises a multi-voice dialogue and narrative (i.e., of the self and others, senior management and coaches) to occur within the text. This means representations of the senior managers, coaches and my own experiences are presented together to provide a narrative that attempts to capture the vividness of a scene, unique voices and the lives of individuals in ways that normal social science texts cannot (see Tierney, 2002). Therefore, the inner feelings and reflections of the researcher-cum-author (i.e., myself) are represented in the following narrative (see Tedlock, 2000).

The field notes and reflexive notes undertaken by the researcher have helped inform a focused narrative, predominantly, on the development of change strategy by EitC senior management (developed and refined with Study 2). In this sense, I have endeavoured to show the reader what I know, what I saw and how I saw it; not just tell, nor persuade through more assertion (see Michell and Charmaz, 1998). The narrative aims to inform, engage and invite the reader to draw his or her own interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Davis, 2000), using the voice and reality of the participants' existence in their own words and experiences (Polkinghorne, 1988). With consideration of the work of Witz (2007) which suggests that after prolonged contact with a participant or immersion within a social context can lead to 'awakening'. In this regard, involvement and immersion with and alongside the feelings, emotion, consciousness of a participant, the research 'awakens' to a life similar to that of the participant. Similarly, such an approach will be consistent with the notions of reader acceptance, plausibility and acceptability of the research claims (see Polkinghorne, 2007).

The narrative presented in Study 3 offers a concise and edited version through reworking of observations and experiences (Okely, 1994). This process involved ongoing development of understanding and discussion with the supervisory team. This triangulation process did not act as a means to validation; however, it did enable further reflexive moments and decisions on how to present that data (Davis, 2000). The constant reflexive process (i.e., recounting the interactions between the author, the senior managers, the coaches and their environment) enabled narratives to evolve. More specifically, the narratives represent the understandings of the researcher and the participants' subjectivities, beliefs and associated working practices (i.e., their way of looking at the world) (Corker, 1999). The following narratives offer representations of the individuals (and the authors) experiences involved in the implementation of the change strategy agreed in Study 2 Part II. Embedded within the narratives are the author's experiences, reflections and perceptions of their respective environments and working practices.

5.6. Results

To set the scene for this section it's important to consider the results from Study 2 Part II and the agreed action. The summary report of the meeting is included in Appendix H. However, the main findings from the action meeting formulated between the author and senior management (Peter Conn and Gary James) are detailed below.

The initial discussion recognised that there was a need to improve practice. It was highlighted that from the report it seemed clear that quality assurance (QA) would be an ideal way to take things forward on a coaching level and a business level. It was recognised that whilst there were other issues raised in DP's report that EitC would certainly want to act upon, the climate at which EitC are now in does not at present permit such sweeping reform.

The discussion then focused on the how to take QA forward. It was highlighted that the 25 new Liverpool School Sport Partnership (LSSP) coaches would be the primary focus of QA. It was noted that the QA that would be implemented should not necessarily be focused on the effectiveness of the coaches, but use a two tier approach to QA. It was recognised that one part of the approach would consist of the mechanics, and pragmatics of the coach, including the quantifiable and measurable aspect of their role. The other tier would be the evaluation of the actual coaching practice.

It was highlighted that two Everton Football Club Academy coaches were tasked to quality assure the new LSSP coaches. Concerns were raised over the 'performance oriented lens' that the academy coaches could adopt when observing the mainly 'process oriented' LSSP coaches (which were also the concerns expressed by the partnership development managers). However it was maintained that these coaches were experienced and informed in observation of coaches at a community level.

It was highlighted that DP's role would be to help and inform the academy coaches and facilitate meetings between them, DP and Peter Conn. It was noted that the development of a QA model

of observation would be specifically attractive. Additionally, it was recognised that it may be useful to have DP and an experienced EitC coach involved. This would also help reduce fears within the LSSP that the coaches would be wrongly quality assured (via the academy coaches adopting a performance oriented lens).

It was recognised from the meeting that a clear understanding of what the LSSP coaches were currently doing and what they were currently being asked to do must be ascertained. With this there must be clarity with the PDM, with regards to QA and it was highlighted that there was a need to have them 'on board'. It was suggested that staff would be informed of DP's role, in facilitating the development of a QA model. It was documented that DP's role at the club would be announced, as the club's approach to develop QA throughout all business levels and that this was a staff development initiative to protect the coaches. With this it was suggested that it may be useful for me to present some results from Study 1, with regards to physical activity levels and positive elements of practice. Peter's role in this would be to act as the supervisor of the QA team to bring everyone involved together and to ensure that plans of action were met.

Action: DP and PC meet to build a plan for the implementation of the QA framework.

Introducing Peter Conn a senior manager within EitC

I have come to know Peter as one of the old guard FitC officers, who entered the world of community football via the PFA (Professional Footballers Association) during the early days of FitC. Peter, having been promoted throughout various leagues and clubs, now sits in a management position within one of the reputed leaders in FitC work, EitC. This was a huge achievement.

Peter made his transition from player to coach to community manager, yet he still had a clear interest in coaching and maintained his coaching accreditations as part of his personal development. This must be a favourable attribute in a coaching environment. Making is easier

for Peter to communicate, understand and deliver and gain credibility with the coaches given his personal coaching background. It appeared that Peter did enjoy the ‘good old days’ of FitC, when it was perfectly acceptable for coaches to turn up with just a bag of footballs and a smile. I assume this, not through the stories he told, but through his mention of when things were easier, or more straight forward. This was certainly, before *we* (i.e., FitC, policy makers, funders) started talking about big social welfare issues such as, obesity and health (and evaluation) with FitC.

My involvement in the research at EitC spanned the duration of Peter’s tenure. Essentially, since his appointment we have been working together. Whilst I allude to Peter’s coaching pedigree, do not be mistaken. He doesn’t wear the coaching apparel, consisting of big jackets, waterproofs, tracksuits, shorts, hoodies, trainers *all* embossed with the club branding. He is a manager and dresses accordingly. With a company car (BMW), Peter ensures he reflects and represents the club impeccably. Wearing Italian suits, black leather shoes, a crisp shirt and aptly coloured (often royal/dark blue) and neck ties, Peter looked the part. Peter was a manager involved in all projects delivered by EitC. From local social inclusion, to regional disability through his attendance at meetings, asking questions and looking for ways to improve EitC.

So where do I fit in, who am I to be telling this story, a story of a Peter and colleagues working within a football club’s community arm and charity? I too work in community football. Coaching and managing projects working across local communities, using (or at least trying to use) football to promote social change has been (and remains) part of my work and social (or philanthropic) activities. Whilst I didn’t make it past playing for my county representative side, I developed most of my friends through football and through developing my community coaching experiences. From these social circles I have a deep sense that much of this friendship, shared interests, language and, over time, philosophies, levels of integrity and morality have come from these very friendships which began on the playing field and the playground. In this sense, I thought (and still do think) football can help others. I wanted to help football clubs replicate

(what I perceived to be) successes that people experience through playing football within and beyond the white lines of the football pitch.

Developing the change strategy

Following the action meeting on Tuesday 16 October 2007, Peter and I acted quickly and immediately to implement the core action arising from the meeting. We had arranged to meet the following week. It became apparent within the action meeting that my role within the reconnaissance phase, essentially one of adopting a broad lens to the activities and effectiveness of EitC and reporting back senior management had potentially put the rapport I had built with the coaches at risk. Specifically, it may have been suggested that my role was merely to watch and report poor practice within EitC with a view to aiding management decisions. It appeared that such a mantra was delivered with little appreciation of the tact required to introduce a 'monitoring' system and the subsequent sensitivity of the coaches to being monitored. In response to the reconnaissance findings and evidence of poor practice (outlined in Study 2, Part D) I had a sense that Peter and Gary felt that they had to act, or at least do something, between the focus group/change meeting and the action meeting in a bid to iron out some of the poor working practices that they had been made aware of. I was a little unsure of how this actually happened on the ground and behind closed doors of EitC.

To this point the nature of collaboration within the action research was at a senior management level in terms of developing and agreeing a change strategy and not (at this point) with the EitC coaches. But I had some concerns over where this left me. Would the coaches still trust me? Would I still be accepted? Would they respond to e-mails? Or even say hello? As an action researcher and ethnographer I deliberately and continuously reminded the coaches of my role within the intervention and highlighted the purpose of the research. We (i.e., the research team and EitC senior management) had not expected to see (nor hear reports of) such poor practice

by the EitC coaches (as detailed in Study 1). So after a period of relative isolation from EitC as we engaged in Study 2 (at a senior management level) I planned my re-entry into EitC and my visit to Goodison Park (the home of Everton Football Club and EitC).

Developing the change strategy - ownership

Monday 22 October 2007 – 10am

I arrive early to Goodison Park driving in the Park End car park and greeted by a reassuring nod from Jacko on security, who stopped to lean in at my window, “Alright Dan, where have you been?”, I explained I had some work at LJMU to deal with and we chatted briefly about the first team performances, Jacko (like me) was a blue. Jacko was like part of the stadium. He had been there for years. A local fella, always looked like he was forced to wear a suit and an EFC tie, which never seemed to fit right with his unshaven grizzle; the lingering stale smell of ale and dandruff sprinkled shoulder pads. He would have fitted better amongst the fellas in the local bookmakers during his breaks. Having worked in a ‘bookies’ for a few years I felt at ease with Jacko. He was a good man, a decent man (and not a bullshitter). Importantly, he still remembered me and his familiar nod and quick chat was just what I needed to make me feel at ease.

Parking up, I fixed my jacket. I had to be smart today. But as I got out I decided to leave the jacket. Shirt and trousers was enough. I was meeting Peter, and he was on my side. I didn’t want to come across too much like management with the coaches, who were quite frankly unknown territory at this point, given the revelation that I could have been portrayed as a covert informer to senior management.

Being from Birkenhead (a district close to Liverpool on the Wirral Peninsula), there was no way that I wanted to be portrayed as a grass. I had made sure the identities of everyone in the research were protected, despite the best efforts of senior management to find those with whom they had mis-placed their trust.

Making my way into the EitC offices via the kitchen I went straight to the kettle. Peter had already said earlier that day we would be in the kitchen. No privacy. Whilst chatting with the new secretary, Jason and Andy came out to the kitchen. Two coaches from the reconnaissance phase. “Danny Parnell!”, “Alright mate”, they called across the kitchen, “fellas...how are you both?” I asked. Jason started, “Good mate, but you know what these are like [senior management], working our balls off aren’t they?”. We passed a few minutes talking football, rugby and motor sport whilst they made their brews, but we didn’t talk about why I was there.

To an extent I was happy about this. I was prepared to talk about Study 1 and also to find out the coaches perception of me and my role, but I was happy to just to reconnect and establish some informal contact at this point.

Peter arrived and explained he now wanted to meet in his office. Peter sat opposite me in the small office overlooking the EitC team. He didn’t want a brew, but I sat down to his side and placed my brew on the edge of his desk. “Dan, this is not my work”, was Peter’s opening line. He paused. I stayed quiet. Peter said firmly, “As far as I am concerned my role is to facilitate meetings and help you make this happen.”

Christ, I thought. Where on earth had this come from. Peter was referring to the quality assurance model, but what's the problem? Why the rough start?

I probe as to why he thought this was the case. “My role is to facilitate Dan, I am not going to be part of it” [i.e., the development quality assurance model and change strategy]. Before I had the chance to ask, Peter explained in quite a short tone, “I am too busy and simply do not have enough time for this”. He continued, “You need to drive the project”, “you need to co-ordinate the project”. At this point my bemused expression must have given away my feelings.

“Dan, let me explain”, Peter says as he moves a little closer to the desk and grabs a pen and paper. “See this?” I lean forward. “This is the quality assurance model” Peter has sketched a triangle. Pointing at each corner Peter confirms, “This is EitC, this is you and this is the LSSP”. I attempted to explain that my role was to facilitate, support and guide and in fact I would probably be between in the middle of the triangle helping each stakeholder (it was a vain attempt to humour his efforts).

The LSSP was the Liverpool School Sport Partnership, which had recently developed a partnership with EitC and Everton Football Club to recruit new coaches to deliver across all Liverpool Primary Schools. Within the action meeting (Study 2, Part II) we discussed the quality assurance of the LSSP coaches, which formed part of the change strategy, which Peter and I were (meant to be) attempting to move forward.

“You will need to meet with Sarah in HR [human resources], as they run the LSSP side of things”. I asked Peter about this, as this was a concern highlighted within the action meeting (i.e., attempting to create change that was clearly out of his/their [senior management] control and responsibility) “Wouldn’t you be a ‘kind’ of line manager for LSSP coaches within EitC?”. Peter quickly said that the LSSP coaches would be line managed by the PDMs [partnership development managers] and EitC would simply employ them. Peter added, “Essentially, you will need to convince Sarah that she needs to make this happen.”

This was pretty frustrating and I felt some déjà vu from the complexities (significant lack of clarity and presence of mixed messages from) within the action meeting. I asked myself “What was going on here?” We are heading down a path to try and make ‘change’ for people that don’t necessarily need (or want) it. This wasn’t action research. The EitC coaches that needed quality assurance not those simply employed by EitC as a marketing arm of the charity. This change ultimately wouldn’t affect Peter, Gary’s or the EitC coaches day-to-day working practice. I asked myself, how this would improve practice!? I was also a little anxious that Peter was positioning me as the key driver for change, for his and Gary’s change.

“Plus, I think you need to include Simon in this [the quality assurance process]. But he can’t do too much due to time constraints”.

Simon was an established community coach, that I had spent some significant time with during the reconnaissance phase. I remember Simon was always continually being dragged between coaching sessions, projects and initiatives, which makes Peter’s decision confusing. Was Simon there as a token representative who really couldn’t do anything (just like Peter himself at this point)? Was he cover for Peter, someone who Peter could ‘say’ was responsible for this from EitCs perspective? Peter had left me questioning the whole action research process and where I fitted within this. Was I a researcher? a practitioner? a puppet?...who knows at this point. One thing that kept running through my head, was why was he complicating something relatively simple. It didn’t make sense (to me).

Whilst the research had adopted a participatory and democratic approach (espoused by Reason and Bradbury, 2001), it was meant to develop practical knowledge and not necessarily ‘pass the buck’ of change to others. Through Peter passing the focus of the change strategy to the LSSP

coaches, where he (and Gary) technically had no authority or responsibility. Reflecting back to the action meeting I had asked this very question:

DP: So with the LSSP coaches, will the PDM give them a structure to deliver?

GJ: Yeah, but we are doing our quality assurance.

PC: It won't be the PDMs alone, we will have an impact and an input. It's going to be more the Primary Link Teachers that coordinate what the coaches actually do in the schools.

Greenwood and Levin (2000) suggested the real test for social research is whether this process can support coaches, practitioners, organisations and/or communities in their process of self-determining social change. Within the action meeting Gary recognised that EitC didn't necessarily have to act on the findings:

GJ: If we had just sat down and said nothing, we would have had an easy life.

But they did choose a change strategy that they thought they could deliver. Therefore, whilst I had encouraged the practitioners to reflect upon new working strategies (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004), senior management had chosen one that essentially 'freed' them from further commitment and/or responsibility and in turn any potential accountability within the research. An example of the organisational structure of EitC is outlined in Appendix A. Both Sarah (from HR) and PDMs and LSSP coaches do not feature on this, as each sit in separate organisations. I had to seek advice from senior colleagues. Despite the initial agreement stated in the action meeting, as Peter (and Gary) lacked the requisite authority to make this *change* across departments and organisations.

Role, responsibilities and blurred lines

On 23 October 2007 an all staff email was sent internally within EitC from Peter Conn, which added further concerns regarding my role within the research.

Hello all,

May i just inform all staff that the research work Danny Parnell did on behalf on EITC last year has been a very valuable and worthwhile process. As a result of this Danny will be continuing on with EITC, as part of his PhD studies. As part of Danny's final year he will be developing a quality assurance model based around the LSSP / MSSC partnership and EITC.

I would appreciate everyone's co-operation as and when Danny requires it so that he is able to reach his academic goal. Please feel free to discuss with Danny the research work he did on our behalf last year.

Thank you

Peter Conn

Peter was seeing through part of *his* change strategy and officially announcing my involvement and research with EitC. Unfortunately, the email outlines that 'I' will be developing the quality assurance model and stated that everyone should cooperate to help *me* achieve *my* 'academic goal'. Ideally, Peter should have identified the quality assurance model as the strategic goal of EitC, which would have showed that he had some ownership of this change strategy and that it would directly affect the day-to-day existence of those within EitC. Like I said, it was meant to be their change, their choice (Greenwood and Levin, 2000). The difficulty rested on how far this notion of 'support' from (me) the researcher can be stretched. By this, can I help by 'doing'? Do I become a researcher-cum-practitioner?

Action research and change management

Recently, action research has been championed, as a legitimate and indeed valuable research method to begin to understand change management (Cruickshank and Collins, 2007; 2012). The process of action research and facilitating the creation of social change has been discussed (Greenwood and Levin, 2000), which echoes elements of change management. In this regard, this research is working directly with senior management concerning strategic and operational changes that effect their (and others) day-to-day existence and working practice. As the participants (i.e., senior management) appeared to require a greater understanding of change management and how this links to behaviour change to help facilitate the change strategy, it

appeared important to explore and introduce this literature. At this particular juncture it appears pertinent to explore the change management literature to support the understanding of this action research project.

Change management

Change management has received considerable attention in organisational research as the quest to optimise performance continues (Stensaker and Langley, 2010). Conceptualized as ‘the process of continually renewing an organisation’s direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers’ (Moran and Brightman, 2001, p. 111), it is not surprising that the construct is also of major theoretical and practical significance across a variety of domains such as health services (Bamford and Daniel, 2005), education services (By et al., 2008) and the military (Ruvolo and Bullis, 2003).

Acknowledging that management (as in this action research study), are habitually required to drive through change initiatives when an improvement in performance is required, much change management research has centred on providing practical frameworks for leaders seeking to develop a specific culture within their organisation (Kotter, 1996; Wissema, 2001; Mento et al., 2002; Luecke, 2003; Ruvolo and Bullis, 2003; Price and Chahal, 2006). Generally involving stages of planning, initiating, implementing and evaluating, researchers have also offered a multitude of measures considered necessary for effective change to occur. Interestingly, these stages offer similarities to that involved in action research. It is no surprise that action research (and ethnography) have been championed as vehicles to develop a greater understanding of change management (Cruickshank and Collins, 2012). For example, creating shared expectations and vision (Kotter, 1996; Luecke, 2003), empowering employees (Ruvolo and Bullis, 2003), managing resistance (Erwin and Garman, 2009) and self-reflection (Mento et al., 2002) have, among others, been highlighted as vital processes. Interestingly, Balogun and Hope Hailey (2004) have stated

that around at least 70% of change management programmes fail to elicit their intended performance goals. Cruickshank and Collins (2012) argue this may be a direct consequence of multiple methodological limitations which characterise the literature (Mento et al., 2002; Ruvolo and Bullis, 2003; Price and Chahal, 2006). Notably, Cruickshank and Collins (2012) highlight gaps in the literature as research tends to focus on macro-level approaches, with very few real time studies available (Bamford and Forrester, 2003).

Furthermore, little attention has been devoted to understanding the perceptions of employees as the targets of change and how new processes impact upon them (Armenakis et al., 1993, 1999; Driscoll and Morris, 2001; Cunningham, 2006; Neves and Caetano, 2006; Devos et al., 2007; Armenakis and Harris, 2009). In short, simplistic prescription is often offered without any clear evaluations of the methods through which it may operate, while advice seems driven by 'brand solutions' (Warriner, 2008) rather than any logically presented, evidence-based process. Action research and ethnography offers an insight into the senior management decision making, change management mechanisms, in real time exploring strategic and operational practice and perspectives.

Factors that influence the creation of change

External or environmental changes have been identified as key influencing factors in creating change. Several published studies exist based on the premise that organisational change results from environmental disturbance (e.g. Emery & Trist, 1965; McCann and Selsky, 1984; Lenz and Engledow, 1986; Ginsberg, 1988; Meyer, Brooks, and Goes, 1990). These studies suggested that, the response to an environmental disturbance is usually determined by the value system that exists within the organisation. Laughlin (1991), however, suggested that organisational change is more complicated than this. It can be explained more appropriately by reference to

organisational sub-systems, design archetypes and an amalgam of interpretive programmes. This has inextricable links with action research.

Laughlin's (1991) typology builds on a number of previous works (especially Miller and Friesen, 1980, 1984; Ranson, Hinings, Greenwood and Walsh, 1980; Walsh, Hinings, Greenwood and Ranson, 1981; Greenwood and Hinings, 1988) and suggests that an organisation will change only when disturbed, kicked, or forced into doing something. Once the organisation undergoes an environmental disturbance the type of change can either be first or second order change (see Table 5.1). Laughlin draws on Smith (1982) and Robb (1988) to put forward the notion that change can be typified as morphostasis (first order), or morphogenesis (second order) change.

Table 5.1. Laughlin's (1991) Typology of Organisational Change

No change	"inertia"
First Order Change (Morphostatic)	"Rebuttal" "Reorientation"
Second Order Change (Morphogenetic)	"Colonisation" "Evolution"

Source: Gray, Walters, Bebbington, and Thompson (1995, p. 216).

It was found that institutionally specific organisations create their own sets of values, rules, myths and symbols, which influence strongly the way they respond to the demands of new environmental conditions (Kikulis, Slack, and Hinings, 1992). Kikulis and colleagues also found that organisational responses or changes were linked to government control over the distribution of funds (1992).

Environment disturbances that concern first-order change are (typically) met by rebuttal or reorientation. For both cases, the fundamental values or beliefs of the organisation do not change. Rebuttal is characterised by an organisation attempting to deflect or externalise the disturbance to return to the previous state of inertia (Gray et al., 1995). Reorientation is the result of a disturbance that cannot be rebutted. These must be accepted or internalised into the

workings of an organisation. They indicated that in each case, while some slight change may occur, the “real heart” of the organisation is essentially unaffected (Gray et al., 1995, p. 216). In this regard, the change is resisted by an organisation, as the previous state of inertia can be resumed.

Laughlin’s (1991) suggestions in the analysis of second-order change, draw heavily upon some aspects of Habermas’ (1984; 1987) critical theory about the various ways in which organisations change. Laughlin adopts Habermas’ model of societal development at a micro-organisational level. The model is abstract and complex. It makes reference to three key inter-related variables. These are what Habermas calls a “life-world”, “systems” and “language decentration” (Giddens, 1979; Habermas, 1984; 1987). The life-world is, to Habermas, a type of cultural space which gives meaning and nature to societal life. While separate and distinct from the more tangible (technical) visible system, it is the social reality that gives these systems meaning and attempts to guide their behaviour through steering mechanisms. Thompson (1983, p285) described systems as “self regulating action contexts which co-ordinate actions around specific mechanisms or media, such as money or power”. In other words, they are distinct elements, but also the tangible expression of the cultural lifeworld. The life-worlds can be regarded as fully rational, rather than instrumentalised or strategised, to the extent that they permit interactions that are guided by communicatively achieved understanding rather than by imperatives from the system world.

Laughlin (1991) applied Habermas’s model of societal development, to distinguish between two types of second-order change. Colonisation is differentiated from evolutionary change by the degree of undistorted communication that exists in determining the organisational change process. Colonisation is forced on the organisation by an initial environmental disturbance. As a consequence, the direction this type of change is not chosen freely, but imposes guiding values and beliefs that may be agreed upon. Finally, evolutionary change is the most desirable form of change and embodies an open and free discourse about where an organisation is going (Laughlin,

1991). Additionally, it is the outcome of agreed major shifts in organisational interpretive programmes. Change of this description assumes that environmental disturbances lead to new interpretive programmes being chosen and accepted by all organisational participants freely and without coercion. Such an evolutionary change tends to lead to a common organisational vision based upon shared values. However, Laughlin (1991) adds that such a change can take many years to complete.

Gray et al. (1995), in their application of Laughlin's (1991) model of organisational change, noted that the major shortcomings of the model are its rigidity and limited ability to fully explain the shifting processes of organisational change in practice. However, according to Gray et al. (1995), Llewellyn (1994) offered a 'third' conceptualization. This offered a post-modern interpretation of organisation, which implies organisations are fluid, increasingly transparent and with shifting boundaries. They suggested that this view of an organisation, when laid across Laughlin's (1991) model, provided a rich and multi-layered conception of the process of organisational change. However, Skinner et al. (1999) believed that this interpretation of boundary management only fine-tuned Laughlin's model and did not address the messiness and contradictions of organisational change; for example, how change is accepted or rejected within the organisation. This type of analysis is necessary to develop critical postmodern interpretation of the change process.

Skinner et al. (1999) applied a critical post-modern framework to examine organisational change within the Queensland Rugby Union (a state sport organisation in Australia). Skinner et al., (1999) suggested the test of their success lies in the extent to which they are able represent accurately how sport organisations undergo change and whether they can reveal and predict the real nature of this change. A post-modern approach argues that organisational change is difficult to neatly categorise because organisations are usually fragmented. Like in action research, conflict, confrontation and empowerment, and sometimes even projecting different visions and

values are evident (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Skinner et al., 1999). This study attempts to frame the multi-layered conception of the process of organisational change management using Laughlin's model and a longitudinal ethnographic approach to explain how change is accepted or rejected within the organisation. Within the action research process the researcher is seeking to empower the participants to reflect on working practice and develop new (and improved) ways to doing things. Here on the researcher seeks to facilitate and support the participants with their change strategy. An understanding of the change management literature and theory is particularly important when working at a strategic (or senior management level) and that proposed change strategies involves and require skilling up participants understanding of change management processes and procedures.

As change management by nature concerns behaviour change it is important to consider the transtheoretical model (TTM) as outlined earlier within the thesis (DiClemente and Prochaska, 1982). The model helps to assess an individual's readiness to act and adopt a new behaviour, as in change management, with success leading to maintenance of any changed behaviours. Thus far behaviour change has been viewed with regards to promoting health in young children, however individual behaviour change is consistent in changing coaching practice and at this stage influencing management approaches.

Confirming my position within the action research process

Having sought advice and clarity regarding my position as an action researcher with Dave Richardson (a senior colleague, academic supervisor and someone who provided ongoing support within the research), it appeared pertinent to outline and clarify my role as a facilitator in the research with Peter and Gary. Similarly, Dave and I discussed the legitimacy of the change strategy given Peter (and Gary's) complete lack of authority and in turn ownership, if we continued to progress with a quality assurance model for the LSSP coaches. To us, it simply

didn't make sense. As within Laughlin's (1991) typology, Peter's actions appear political and in his self-interest, rebutting the change strategy to shift the focus of the change on external (LSSP) coaches (allowing the status quo) to remain (Macintosh and Whitson, 1990; Gray et al., 1995). The collaborative action research process should have been empowering the practitioner, to understand and improve their own working environments (Lather, 1986; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Thus far there had been little or no collaboration with the coaches with the action research process. The change strategy *had* to be navigated towards working within EitC and within the EitC coaches (where the research began and belonged).

Barriers to change (not unexpected)

Since meeting with Dave, I had not had time to respond to, nor to meet with, Peter to clarify my role and the focus of the research. In the meantime Peter had made progress and arranged a meeting with Sarah from HR at the club.

Wednesday 31 October 2007 – 12:30am

“You need to sell, sell, sell. Do not take no for answer. Just keep talking and offering our options”. I listened in to Gary, waiting for my print job, prior to the meeting with Sarah. He was finishing off some one-to-one training on sales with a new member of the EitC team.

Gary had been in to sort out the finances of the charity, but I didn't expect to hear the hard sell lines. Maybe this was common place in charities? It certainly reflected his conversation from the action meeting (Study 2, Part II) about having to sell tickets and help the club get 'bums on seats'. I guess this was part of the charity becoming more commercial. Maybe this might help the charity get some financial sustainability.

Gary and Peter joined me as we head out of the community office onto the edge of pitch. We had to walk around the pitch to get to the club's corporate boxes (box 3 – sponsored by the clubs main shirt sponsor at the time). We shared some exchanges, but things were very informal. Gary wished 'me' luck and left us to the meeting. Sarah was waiting for us.

Whilst I admittedly expected an older, maybe even portly woman from 'HR', Sarah was nothing of that sort. She was young, slim, wore a dress suit and smiled as we came in. Plus she was on time...not something commonplace in football. I instantly liked her.

Sarah was keen to know about my PhD, which became a dominant focus of the meeting. I tried to steer the conversation away from the PhD and towards focusing on the change strategy. Peter stayed quiet throughout. I was certainly on my own on this one.

She was obviously an intelligent lady, she wanted to know more about the PhD, so I entertained her. To be honest, it felt good to explain the research to someone new in front of Peter. It meant I could go back to

basics, making sure my role was clear to her and hopefully Peter (who listened on)...two birds with one stone. Finally, I was able stress that this was not about the PhD, but about EitC's change strategy and Gary and Peter's intentions.

“Dan, there are so many stakeholders involved here, the LSSP, the PDMs, the academy manager and coaches, who all need to be consulted” said Sarah finishing with a laugh. “Wouldn’t it make more sense to develop this within EitC and then roll out a finished article [finished quality assurance model] to LSSP? That would make more sense for me and would defo help me get the others [stakeholders] on board”. I sat back at this point. Peter remained silent.

Yes! Too right Sarah. Of course that would make more sense...finally...someone else within the club shared what Dave and I had discussed (at what was bloody obvious!). This was Peters opportunity to overcome a significant barrier to the change strategy. Without any questions, he could refine the change strategy and leave this meeting, in my opinion, on a winner! Surely Peter would see this opportunity.

The meeting continued with Peter still pursuing the LSSP option. Sarah challenged Peter “Surely, this is something you need to do within your team?” Peter treated the questions with disregard and didn’t budge. Eventually, Sarah ended the meeting asking me to provide an overview document for her covering the discussion and details on the change strategy, which I agreed.

Leaving the meeting Peter and I walked back across the stadium, Peter’s head was down. He used his arms to emphasise his will when he said, “Dan we need to drive this. I just can’t drive this time wise, but for the club I will be the main contact. Make sure you run the document for Sarah past me first.”

I sensed that Peter was under a little bit of pressure to get the change strategy underway. I couldn’t understand why he wouldn’t budge and simply develop/refine the change to focus (more logically and easily) on the internal EitC coaches. It was clear that he didn’t have the authority here. This was his opportunity to move onwards and forwards without receiving a blatant ‘no’. He/we could have come back to the table at a later date with a developed quality assurance model. Why was he trying to force this? Did he want rid of this change strategy that much?

Leaving EitC today felt like a further step away from us making progress despite being able to meet Sarah. This left me trying to make sense of the scenes unfolding with Peter. I needed to meet Peter and clarify his intentions with the research and the decision making process he was going through. Deep down, I knew I needed to try and navigate the change towards a more logical focus, despite having some unexpected help from Sarah!

Monday 19 November 2007 – 10:00am

Following a failed attempt to meet Peter, and no further updates from Sarah, I had finally managed to pin him down to a meeting. I grabbed a brew, Peter declined as we parked up at the kitchen table, with Peter looking a little more anxious and busy than usual.

“This is a really complex situation Dan. I am having really difficulty contacting Sarah. I just don’t think the LSSP option will work; we might need to run this via the EitC coaches first. I mean, this is not to say we won’t do the LSSP option, but we will do it internally first” he explained. Feeling a great sense of relief I ask “That’s not necessarily a bad thing though is it?” Peter quickly looked at me straight in the eye, “If this doesn’t happen, it’s down to me.” At this point Simon came and joined us on Peter’s request having just left a meeting with Sarah. Peter asked Simon to confirm Sarah was still in the stadium. Standing up he declared, “Right I am giving this another shot.” Peter stood up and left us in the kitchen quickly. We assumed he was off to find Sarah.

Whilst I was almost ecstatic that common sense or perhaps (more realistically) a hierarchal and political barrier emerged, I was a little concerned with the perceived pressure and responsibility Peter was feeling. But let's be honest, he agreed to this change strategy and he could change it at any time. He had this power and the opportunity to refine the change strategy.

Peter's abrupt departure, to try and catch Sarah (at the other end of the stadium), was very uncharacteristic of Peter which left me a Simon a little taken back. Simon and I caught up on life, family and a bit of work over a brew. I will introduce Simon in more detail later in this chapter, but in short he's one of the good guys, he's genuine. This was not just a job to him. He really did want to help people and make a difference in the local community.

15 minutes later a very flush faced, out of breath Peter came through the kitchen door. "Alright lads, I didn't catch her, she's out on meetings. We will go for the internal quality assurance model with our coaches." The meeting came to an end shortly after with Peter confirming Simon will be supporting me with the development of the internal quality assurance model.

This is exactly what I had hoped for. I am not sure why I cared so much, this was not my organisation. I guess, the option to focus on the LSSP coaches who were unrelated and uninvolved in the research simply didn't feel right. We now had the opportunity to help the EitC and the coaches I had spent the reconnaissance phase working with. This just felt right.

The change strategy had changed slightly to focus on the coaches managed within EitC and those involved in the Study 1 (i.e., the reconnaissance phase) of the research. Whilst Gilbourne (2001) stressed that it was unrealistic to expect all action research in the workplace to happen smoothly, the current events did raise some challenging ethical concerns over the perceived pressure and exposure to relatively powerless situations that Peter was creating in his bid to deliver the initial change strategy. However, Peter was creating these situations himself, as he did have the power to change the strategy. Despite the conflict (whilst not uncommon in action research) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), it has helped us focus on the EitC coaches and our initial participants' working practice. As a facilitator of the change strategy chosen by Peter and Gary, I didn't want to force a new strategy despite the apparent obvious need to. This change was owned by EitC, they had to develop and refine the change strategy. Fortunately, for the relevance of action research, meeting with Sarah (HR) had helped ensure any change would (more likely) help improve the working practice and effectiveness of EitC and the coaches. This more realistic, tangible and controllable position was essential for any effective action research to occur (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004).

Monday 26 November 2007 – 10:00am

“Alrite Dan”, Peter obviously wasn’t expecting me today. Cancelled meetings and people forgetting things appear to be common place in EitC, so this was no surprise. “I am still trying to contact Sarah Dan!” This was news to me, as I thought we had put this to bed! “O right, how come? I thought we had agreed to focus internally?”. Peter responded smiling, “I know, we will, but this will be more interesting for you. To include the academy.”

Peters continued focus on the development of the LSSP quality assurance model began to make sense. “Breaking the historic divide” between EFCs Academy and Community department appears to have re-emerged from the action meetings discussion. Was this about Peter making a statement, an impact, making a flagship initiative, and breaking down this historic divide? Or was he just wanting to keep the change away from his coaches and himself? One thing for sure was that I certainly didn’t want it.

As we parted company having made an action to meet with Simon, to see through the change strategy, Peter adds, “make sure you cc’ me in [the email], I want to attend.”

I had obviously assumed Peter was attending, but if not who was driving this. I didn’t appear realistic to have a community coach (Simon) leading and driving Peter and Gary’s change strategy. But given Peter’s earlier quips about time, I was pleased he had found time to attend!

November – January

Following our previous meeting a number of emails were exchanged between myself, Peter and Simon, as I attempted to monitor progress and the new refined change strategy. At one point Peter expressed his displeasure at having to work around Simon’s (an EitC coach) availability. Despite Peter reporting (on several occasions) that he did not have the time to see-through the change strategy, he remained adamant that he attended every meeting (now as an observer) rather than ‘driver’.

During December Peter cancelled a number of meetings at short notice, again. This continuous deferral, delay or disorganisation seemed to typify his approach to management. This certainly hampered my ability to monitor progress of the change, which was not a good sign.

I wasn’t sure whether this was Peter’s attitude toward the action, just him or a consequence of the fact the hectic culture of the organisation within which he worked or both of the above? I know he’s busy... either way, but Peter was a senior manager and I couldn’t see him trying to do anything about it. If he couldn’t change this, who could?

We agreed on a meeting in January, which fitted nicely, as the Parnell family welcomed its newest member - George.

This was probably the only time I was thankful for the Peter’s lack of commitment to meetings (and as it was appearing, to the change strategy in general)!!

A new year and a new change strategy

Monday 29 January 2008 – 10:00am

Today began with a meeting between Peter, Simon and an LJMU volunteer, Steve, who was looking at the website for EitC. We chatted through the learning outcomes of the role and Peter made it clear he wanted more out of Steve. I did my best to resolve the tension here, as I needed Peter on good form for our meeting afterwards. Things were not looking great.

Before we started Peter, Simon and I grabbed a bite to eat from the local cafe. When we returned I asked Peter how we had been getting on. “Well the LSSP quality assurance is out of the window.” I thought to myself thank god! But we know this? Surely Peter hasn’t been still chasing that one? Peter continued, “We will start on our 16 staff within EitC”. I didn’t want to waste any time, so I asked a straight question to Peter, “Ok, where are we going to start with the quality assurance then?” There was a slight pause, before we all laughed.

At this point there was a sense between the 3 of us that quality assurance model or framework whatever we called it was becoming a pain. We were 3 months in and still had made no progress. I am not one for pointing fingers, but I am also not one for wasting time. I really needed Peter to action ‘something’ and get some tempo started within the change strategy.

Our discussion was led by Peter, “We need statistics and we need them in on time” [from the coaches]. I could understand the need for statistics and monitoring. This would form part of the quality assurance. “We also need all the coaches’ qualifications and what training and courses they want to do.”

This was really pleasing; two basic parts of the quality assurance were finally being discussed! I took the opportunity to ask about the lack of communication between the coaches. Peter took a second, as if remembering our meetings within Study 2, “Ok, we need to look at session plans, and yes, you’re right. Let’s get all heads [heads of EitC departments] together, disability, social inclusion and the other areas. Get them to bring anything they are using, any session plans and let’s get a generic one organised.”

The heads of departments were senior coaches, coordinators and managers in their own right. For example, Phil Moses who was head of disability managed over 5 staff, locally, regionally and even an additional 2 in Shanghai (China). These guys had a lot of experience and responsibility within the organisation.

I sensed that we might need something to get the coaches to buy in to this. I mean who wants to do more forms? I asked, “Peter, what we will we actually use these forms for?” Peter paused thinking this through, “Umm, well when a coach is covering a session, he can go and see what has been delivered before. I will fit some session plan observation into my performance reviews with the lads too, we do this twice a year.”

At this point, I was made up that we were finally getting somewhere (at least between us). Simon was staying very quiet. I thought to myself, that he must be thinking, “Shit, not more forms, where will we find the time to do this!?”

We discussed recording the punctuality of the coaches and the two tiered approach to quality assurance. Before moving on the potential of some coach-to-coach peer review. Peter explained this would be too complicated, “Let’s keep it simple. Plus, I don’t trust the coaches to review one another.” This blatant and open comment surprised me, especially in front of Simon (one of the coaches). Simon and Peter discussed this before agreeing that maybe two coaches could be selected to conduct all peer reviews.

As the meeting drew to a close, Peter asked me to bring together some of the discussion points and actions. A key action was to meet with the coaches from each department to develop the session plans and forms that would shape the quality assurance processes. I felt reassured by one of Peter’s final comments, “We have had some dips in tempo in making this happen [the change strategy], but I am keen to get things going fast now.” Peter appeared to be showing a bit more responsibility for the change strategy.

In a recent article, Vaughan-Smith (2013) discussed the strategic power of trust, as outlined in the best-selling book by Covey and Merrill (2006), *The Speed of Trust*. The core parts of trust include integrity, intent, capabilities and results. Accordingly to Covey and Merrill (2006) understanding, Peter's clear absence of trust in the EitC community coaches indicates that barriers will hamper the speed of any change strategy. Therefore, as some progress with the change strategy was emerging. This wasn't an all singing, all dancing two tiered quality assurance model, but it was progress. It was (potential) change and Peter owned this. It was something that I had to persuade him to do, but he was showing some critical awareness and a keenness to see this through. This was his. The key actions are detailed below:

Actions points:

- Arrange meeting for coaches (Tuesday 5th Feb, 10am at EITC)
- DP to collate a database of qualifications and development needs of coaches

Addressing the 'dilemma' described by Kemmis (2001), this was a change that Peter appeared to want and was now more able to see how it would address (some of) the problems he was experiencing with his coaches. So in my eyes this was progress. The document from this meeting which was sent to Peter can be found in Appendix H.

Tuesday 5 February – 10:00am

Today was the day of the coaches meeting. Something Peter had organised. Since our meeting on the 29 Jan, I had chatted with Simon via email trying to gain an update on progress from his behalf ahead of today. One of his closing remarks was, "I hope you get a good turnout". It may have been a good luck line, but I felt his scepticism and perhaps a sense that maybe the coaches (if they turned up) would be difficult to please. It was clear that Simon didn't feel any ownership to the change strategy.

To be fair to Simon, Peter was asking him to turn up, but I can't really say he had been empowered into his role. By this, Peter told him to come, so he turns up. Peter had not pitched this to Simon as an opportunity to display his leadership or communication skills. Simply, a turn up and help Dan. I recall from my coaches interviews in Study 1 that Simon aspired to move up in EitC, as opposed to 'move on', like some of the other coaches. If Peter knew his coaches at all...(he had spent more time with them than me)...he would have seen this as an opportunity to skill up and empower Simon.

For the meeting, out of the 16 coaches invited only Simon had confirmed attendance. We were joined by one other coach, Colin. We discussed the possibility of cracking on, but we were conscious that Peter wanted all departments from across EitC represented.

Additionally, we felt we needed more in attendance for the rest of the EitC coaches to buy in the changes. The new plan was to email everyone and aim for the 23 February, as Simon and Colin highlighted this as a good date for most.

Putting this lightly, there was an obvious disappointment from myself that there was a poor turnout for the meeting, however I was beginning to understand that coaches and management alike adopted a relaxed and informal approach to meetings. In other environments, blaming what I had come to refer to as a 'football watch', as a reason for being late (late 20 or 30 minutes in some cases), would be a simple sign of disrespect. I cannot say I didn't feel like the lateness and cancellations were not difficult to take personally. It was tough. Time wasted. I would have rather spent time writing up papers or even better spending time with my family. Instead I was hanging on, hoping for the change strategy to materialise. This wasn't the first time I questioned whether these guys wanted the change as much as I did. Moreover, I felt I was persuading Peter rather than helping Peter or Simon. I needed some support, senior support from Peter to help get the coaches to attend.

Tuesday 19 February 2008

Over that past week I had made a number of attempts to speak or meet with Peter regarding monitoring progress with the change strategy, detail challenges and barriers and outline ways to overcome them. I had sent over the coach's qualification (professional development) questionnaire as requested, but (yet again) I had heard nothing. We had lost out tempo (which hadn't really started!).

Out in the cold, I was left wondering what had happened to Peters 'let's make it happen fast' attitude. Taking a moment, I remembered how disgusted and upset Peter and Gary were during the initial focus group in Study 2, Part I. Obviously, they had forgotten this feeling and it certainly appeared they had lost the urgency to improve working practice and make things right. Again I was left at a dead end waiting for some tempo in the change strategy.

This typified the complex meeting of cultures. In this case the monitoring and evaluation, evidence based practice culture associated with academic research met with the performance/outcome oriented and/or just 'doing' culture present within football. In this sense, Peter (Gary and Simon) were all too busy 'doing', to be concerned with thinking ahead and to the future. Vaughan-Smith (2013) highlighted that respect and engaging in trust behaviours was key to developing and receiving trust. Lateness supported the notion that EitC senior management lacked trust and respect for the community coaches. However, this change strategy was something agreed between the researcher and senior management (i.e., including Peter).

Friday 22 February 2008 – 9:30am

As I waited for Peter to arrive for our 9:30, like expected these days, he was late. It was relatively early in the morning and most coaches hadn't arrived back from their morning coaching sessions, so Simon and I had a quick catch up over a brew.

"Mate, this is a fuckin joke." said Simon. "What is mate?" I replied. "They [senior management] have got us working our balls off. I mean, the pay is shite and I am just

knackered. I have a list of jobs to do coming out my arse. How am I supposed to see the kids and the family working this much.” Simon went on to talk about some of his experiences over the past few weeks at EitC. He looked and sounded physically and emotionally drained. For not the first time, Simon had mentioned his (relatively poor) pay and the extent of his workload.

I hadn't realised this, but over the past couple of months my relationship with Simon had grown strong. I had somehow become his avenue to release and talk. I was someone who would listen and empathise. In the 'office' environment there isn't much space and scope to talk and listen intently rather any discontent would be vented through half hearted moans and banter.

At this point, I recall comments made by Gary in Study 2 regarding his coaches being at a low level of quality (so we can't expect or ask too much of them) and that he can work them 100% of their hours. I can't help but sense his comments, although pitched as a 'bit of banter' was in fact, his genuine feelings. Maybe management simply didn't empathise with the role of the coach and the difficulty of coaching long days and evenings for wages approximately between £15-19,000 per annum.

At about 10am the kitchen door swung open and Peter entered, “Hi Dan, Simon, I'll be with you soon.” For some reason, Simon took that as his cue to head back to his desk. Peter called me to his office, “Just grabbing a brew”, I replied. I didn't want to be rushing and running round on his beck and call when he strolls in 30 minutes late without an explanation or apology.

I headed through the community office, which was getting a little busier now. Sitting down with Peter, he closed the door. We talked a little about life, but I was realising I knew little about Peter outside of work.

“Right, the main thing today, is that whatever happens, you and Simon make the quality assurance happen on Thursday.” Ok, I thought to myself. With this Peter reached into his satchel and took out an A4 booklet stapled together. “Take a look at this quality assurance handbook I have developed Dan.” After a short read, I realised Peter had copied and pasted this from the internet and given it a blue and branded background.

To be honest, the quality assurance guide Peter had given me looked good. But this was not what he said he wanted nor was it what we agreed. We agreed to work with the coaches; we'd agreed to engage with the coaches. Given that I had observed some discontent with the coaches already, this wouldn't go down well.

“Peter, this looks great. Where did you get this from?”, “It's just something I knocked together on the weekend”, he replied sitting back. “Is this something you are going to implement? This differs quite a lot from what we have discussed, I mean this is quite complex.”

I recall Gary's comments in Study 2, Part II and remembered the need for this to be simple:

GJ: That's almost what I am suggesting, I am being realistic. If we can take from this, what we know we can implement successfully, rather than saying let's make our guys....you know, how deep is quality assurance? How deep do you want to go? It is at this point, the basics of quality assurance. If we get that right then we move

a step up. Our guys [coaches] are happy to be challenged on the basics, but they are coaches. We are having difficulty in explaining the requirement of stats.

And I was also thinking, we can't even arrange a bloody coaches meeting to discuss session plans, let alone implement this. Peter had only refined the change strategy, aside from this he had input little into making the change happen.

“This is just a guide, we might implement it, we might not. But it's a guide to get us started.” I mentioned my concerns regarding the coaches receptiveness to this, their workload already and also echoed his and Gary's comments from Study 2, “But Dan, I know these coaches. I know who works and who doesn't. They think they have it tough, they should try a day in my shoes.”

We had discussed a more empowering approach working with the coaches, as ultimately any change would affect their day-to-day existence. The change strategy, at this point, was a little unknown. It was focused on the EitC coaches, but was it session plans with staff development or was it this complex booklet or somewhere in between? This was not clear. In my mind, it was about staff development and session planning, in Peter's it was about a very controlling, top-down quality assurance model (including if you don't get your petrol receipts in on time, you don't get paid). As for Simon...well he was too busy, to be thinking about all this. I came away wondering about Peter's comments around 'making it happen' on Thursday...make what bloody happen?

It was clear that Peter had lost touch with the realities of the coaches' day-to-day existence and had no appreciation of the discontent expressed by Simon (and the other coaches) regarding the working environment. Peter had agreed to focus the change strategy internally and was in essence 'saying the right things' or 'talking the talk' in meetings, he was unwilling to make this happen himself or 'walk the walk'. It appeared that this shift from rebuttal of the change strategy only went as far as a reorientation (Laughlin, 1991). In this regard, Peter appeared to be looking for some change, but nothing that would affect the core (or heart of the) business. Such a change would therefore allow inertia to maintain and in turn the status quo continues (Laughlin, 1991). Resistance to change was natural within any organisation (Erwin and Garman, 2009), but it appeared that Peter needed to embrace some personal changes himself in order to see-through the process of organisational change (as suggested by Evans, 1994). In this regard, something appeared to be holding him back from successfully managing the change. I had some real concerns over Peter's appropriateness as my 'key change person' in the research and his requisite skill base to see through the change strategy.

The EitC coaches

Thursday 28 February 2009 – 10:45am

Arriving at EitC I parked up at the kitchen table to prepare for the coaches' meeting. Simon couldn't make but Phil and Mike from the disability department did turn up. Another failed attempt!

Phil Moses and Mike Hassel are from the disability department within EitC. Phil heads up the department and Mike is his assistant. I have known Phil since he coached me when I was kid. He is a huge ambassador for disability football and football in general. Both chaps also have a degree from LJMU in sport science (Phil) and development (Mike). We have lots of common ground and a good rapport.

We made the most of the time and Phil and Mike shared some of the good practice they believed they were leading with EitC. To be fair, these guys had session plans in place, were gaining feedback from teachers and children and had some other novel ideas to create some lasting legacy when they attend schools. I explained to them where we were with the research. Phil laughed, "are they [the other coaches] not doing session feedback? I e-mailed every department with what we were doing for them to use!" His surprise was shared by Phil who couldn't believe other departments were not acting in this way.

As the informal conversation unfolded we touched on staff development. Although Phil was waiting to complete his level 3 qualification, both recognised that they didn't have the time required to up skill, in order to meet the demands of their current positions.

The English Football Association offer a number of accreditation awards; this is the FA Level 3 Coaching qualification. Reminiscing on the reconnaissance finding and the need for more relevant professional development for the EitC coaches. I didn't bother asking Phil about whether he would ever use any of his level 3 qualification coaching disabled children in primary schools.

I asked, "why don't you have the time? If it's in your appraisal, then surely they need to make time for your development?" Mike explained, "Well, if Aldey Hey Children's hospital call up asking for a session for 12 weeks for poorly children, we can't really say no." Phil gives another couple of example to support his position.

I could understand why Phil and Mike couldn't say no to some of these requests. Interestingly, the way these two talk echoes that of Simon's (despite Simon losing some of his enthusiasm of late). This is more than a job to them, they are genuine and they want to make a difference. It's as if they felt accountable to the clients and communities that they served. I was curious whether Peter knew about this (or cared). We soon wrapped up the meeting and Simon arrived, as if just on time of a catch up.

I followed Simon to his desk, "I am fine mate, but you need to have a word with Peter about people not turning up," Simon demanded. "I know mate, I am not sure what to do, everyone appears too busy and Peter isn't making this happen." Simon replied loudly, "It's fucking ridiculous mate, they [senior management] are taking the piss", people in the office turn around (but then turned back to their computers) Simon continued to talk about TOIL and hours owed to him, "I do 18 extra hours every week and can only get 7 hours back. I get asked to do all the shit for everyone." I tried to stay quiet, as he continued. "Look at this. I get a call Tuesday night asking me to pick up two Malaysian kids from Manchester airport at 5am in the morning, so I was up at 4am, but they ended up with immigration!". I asked why this had happened, "because it was for the Academy, but am I the only one who fuckin drives? Look at the rest of Tuesday [showing me his timesheets], 10am in the office, coaching until 4pm, coaching 6-9:30pm. There's a month's TOIL in one day!"

Time off In Lieu (TOIL) is time off which staff are allowed to take for hours worked beyond the normal working day.

I wasn't sure what to say exactly at this point. My response of "that doesn't look good" didn't seem enough, but I know "just fucking leave then" wouldn't have sounded right either!

"...but then you get asked to do birthday bashes, match days, host foreigners and one month you go to Preston to work for 9 hours, on a fucking Sunday! You know what mate, I am a fucking mug. Our bonus this year was £300...the grounds men got £500! [we laughed] I am a mug!"

"Right, come on mate, let's go for a brew", I sometimes feel like I am the stereotypical English woman solving problems with a brew, but the kettle/kitchen time is a welcome break to the office. We chatted about our families and how to squeeze time into the day for them, but as I left I couldn't help but question why he didn't just leave, he responded, "I love the job mate. Not the bullshit. When I get to coach and help people, there's nothing better."

This 'top down' approach and subsequent concentration on the technical or pragmatic details of practice appeared to be undertaken with no regard for the need to understanding that the human influence in success or failure of change critical (New and Singer, 1983). Previously, I had been concerned with the vacuum of trust from senior management to community coaches, however the coaches lack of attendance suggest that the lack of trust is two-way. The endemic behaviour of staff within EitC was conducive with the lack of trust and subsequent barriers to and slow progress in change (Vaughan-Smith, 2013). Management have a tendency to neglect and/or ignore the human dimension when implementing change and how new processes impact upon them (Steiner, 1989; Levine, 1997; Driscoll and Morris, 2001; Cunningham, 2006; Neves and Caetano, 2006; Devos et al., 2007), with at least 70% of change management programmes fail to elicit their intended performance goals (Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2004). It was evident (to me) that the climate, characters and the culture within EitC at the time would not be receptive to such an authoritarian, almost dictatorial and 'top-down' approach to quality assurance, especially from Peter. Especially, where a lack of trust was present. I had to try and feed some of this back to him, although his lack of will to make things happen and the fact he wasn't aware (or didn't share) the good practice being implemented within disability raised further questions regarding his role as the key change person.

Ethical issues

It has been claimed that research involves the exploitation of those studied. I was keen to ensure that I wasn't someone entering a setting to furnish my own personal academic and career driven agenda. EitC was never and would never be my fodder for research. Ethics is an ongoing concern and is recognised and discussed within ethnography, as it often includes entering a complex and dynamic research setting (Goodwin et al., 2003). Entering the setting through a gatekeeper (which in this case was Peter and Gary – my key change persons) (Le Compte and Schensul, 1999). These were the senior management team at EitC and responsible for ensuring that I had access and to a degree acceptance within EitC (Tedlock, 2000). Alongside this, these gatekeepers were responsible for communicating the research process to the staff within EitC. Despite this, during the extensive engagement undertaken supporting the development of rapport with staff (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) the purpose of the researcher was continually shared and affirmed. Whilst senior management and coaches were made fully aware that I was conducting research and interested in their the effectiveness of the health related football coach, it has been seen to be not uncommon for participants to quickly forget about the researchers presence and, as they come to know the researcher (me) as a person (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Ferdinand et al., 2007), and potentially drop their guard about what they may or may not have wanted the researcher to know or observe. Through the closeness and in some cases friendships developed. Initially, I did seek a low profile previously in both Study 1 and to an extent Study 2 (as espoused by Krane and Baird, 2005), however as tensions between ethnography and action research emerged my role also evolved.

An argument exists within the literature about the exploitative potential of ethnographer research. Commentators have made recommendations that ethnographic researchers should be giving something back in way of services of payment; or that participants should be empowered by becoming part of the research, as seen with varied success in Howarth (2002: 25) and

Scheper-Hughes (2004: 47-48). There are long standing and ongoing debates surrounding a researcher's *action* in ethnography (Humphreys, 1970; Benjamin, 1999). There are those who argue that what is and what is not legitimate action on the part of research is necessarily a matter of judgement by the researcher in the context. Termed *ethical situation* the researcher must consider the benefits and costs of pursuing certain research. Ethnographers consider the legitimacy of this approach reasoning that research should avoid the risk of causing offence or harm to participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

This research adopts an approach that utilises the principles of ethnography to better understand the realities of a setting to begin to stimulate change in line with an action research framework. Ethnographic methods that have been highlighted as important in developing a greater understanding of and to enhance the efficacy of change management research literature (Cruishank and Collins, 2012). However, such work does not explicitly align with the intentions of ethnography. Certainly, rather than “understanding...culture...from the perspective of the group members...[to] lend insight into...behaviours, values, emotions and mental states” (outlined by Krane & Baird, 2005, p. 87), researchers will be primarily concerned with the process by which a culture was created and not its outcomes (Cruishank and Collins, 2012). Kellman and Beckman (2003) attempt to bridge the gap from research to application in sport psychology and champion the action research methodology (Kellmann and Beckman, 2003). In this research the principle of ethnography offer a valuable approach to enter, understand and support positive action (change) facilitation within a setting. In line with the work of Kemmis (2001, 93) on action research, researchers should be working with people already committed to addressing felt dissatisfactions in the workplace. Provided a transparent and collaborative approach is undertaken the use of principles of ethnography in an action research framework, provided a transparent relationship is formed, is both a valuable and credible approach to facilitate positive change.

I was left asking the questions, as to whether Peter was in this position. A position committed to taking action. Phil and Mike on the other hand (the coaches) were already making changes, although under the radar (or maybe no-one was looking). Moreover, for the first time in a while I felt I had met coaches who shared my enthusiasm to help people through football. At this point in the research I faced a dilemma between what was more important, either my relationship with Peter, helping him change for the benefit of the overall change or trying to navigate. I took the decision to avoid further potential ethically harmful situations with Peter to aim to begin to work more closely with Phil and Mike without destabilising the status quo within EitC. These coaches [Mike and Phil] were, what I would consider, *genuine* coaches. These thoughts had to go on hold, as I had another attempt at meeting the coaches first....third time lucky?

Wednesday 5 March – 2008 – 10:00am

Phil, Mike, Simon and Jason join me for the coaches meeting. Despite many of the 16 coaches at EitC being absent, I knew the meeting was going ahead to day, either way. Not because I wanted to force it, but because Phil and Mike wanted to change things themselves. Even in the absence of Peter.

I couldn't help but think that this was the first time during the action phase I was amongst people that wanted to *change* things more than me. Maybe this wouldn't be the change strategy as Peter had (re)defined it, but it might make things better. "Right let's stop fucking about and get started," Phil breaks my thoughts – we are away...

To make sure everyone was on the same page, I clarified the confidentiality of the meeting and outlined the background to the research and the purpose of the meeting. The coaches joked "what school development programme", but I outlined this was about staff development and ensuring coaches didn't abuse the trust of EitC. This settled the tone of the meeting and we got under way.

The initial discussion surrounded session plans and feedback forms. This was a real open and knowledge sharing process. The lads genuinely wanted to share, develop and enhance what they were doing.

I asked the lads to create a list of expectations of the coach, "health and safety, engaging the kids, appropriate age specific sessions, enjoyable, planned, equipment, dressed appropriately...[the list went on]". This was all quality and things we could incorporate moving forward. This made sense to Mike, "you just want your project to be bigger and better and more successful."

We were about an hour and a half into the meeting before we moved onto other issues including job specifications ("it's laughable", Phil), workloads ("it's abuse, I just feel neglected", Simon), resources, funding pressures, bonuses and job insecurity, ("it's scary

that we don't have enough money", Phil), no time for personal development...[the discussion went on].

After the two and half hours we decided it was best to end the meeting and that I would include these outcomes of the discussion within future reports.

It appeared that the coaches had a displayed characteristics and feeling associated with a social accountability for the clients and communities that they serve. Accountability in the not-for-profit (or third) sector has numerous definitions, but generally its viewed as a "process of holding actors responsible for actions" (Fox and Brown, 1998, p12) or as "the means by which individuals and organisations report to a recognised authority (or authorities) and are held responsible for their actions" (Edward and Hulme, 1996, p.967). Ebrahim and Weisband (2007) identified four core components of accountability, which include transparency (collecting information and making it accessible for public scrutiny), answerability (providing clear reasoning for actions and decisions, including those not adopted), compliance (through monitoring and evaluation of procedures and outcomes, combined with transparency to report findings) and enforcement (or sanctions for shortfalls in compliance, justification or transparency). Others believe accountability is not necessarily just about responding to others, but about 'taking responsibility' for oneself (Cornwall, Lucas and Pasteur, 2000, p.3). Either driven externally by meeting prescribed standards (Chisolm, 1995, p.141) or internally motivated by 'felt responsibility' through an individual's action (Fry, 1995). Both Phil and Mike appeared to have developed their own sense of 'felt responsibility' and were already engaged in accountability practices. They appeared to be ahead of the changes senior management aspired to.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) outlined that within the critical paradigm there are elements of confrontation, empowerment and even conflict within action research. More than ever I felt I had to consult with Peter in more detail to prevent any potential conflict between senior management and coaches through the implementation of a top-down quality assurance model. I

felt that Peter had other management issues to deal with the coaches (his team) prior to implementing new measures of quality assurance.

Thursday 20 March 2008 – No response from Peter

Since the coaches' meeting I had been eager to catch up with Peter and get an update on his thoughts on the change strategy. After no response from my emails to Peter for 7 days, he eventually contacted me late one evening to meet the following day. So much for heightened tempo in the change strategy! This couldn't happen and we soon realised we couldn't find a date. As well as his management role, Peter had professional development commitments as a level 1 coaching tutor.

Peter was qualified to assess the coaches that undertake their FA Level 1 coaching qualification. It was great that Peter could find the time for his professional development, however as a FA Level 1 coaching tutor, I would have hoped he could have transferred some of these skills to support his own coaches who appear to need help and support (and time).

Friday 28 March 2008 – 10:00am

It had been some time since the coaches meeting, which turned into somewhat of a focus group on quality assurance and current issues within EitC. Peter had opted for a closed door meeting in his office. A few of the coaches were in the office outside, but it was Friday and things were quiet. I asked Peter if it was ok to record the meeting [with the Dictaphone] for the purpose of writing up. He didn't look too pleased with this, "Ok, but from now on I would prefer the questions in advance if you are going to record."

I knew I should have left the Dictaphone off at this point. But we have used it so many times before (always) confidentially, so I didn't understand his apprehension.

Conversation began around coach consistency and switching sessions, "They [the coaches] all know that consistency in delivery is key, but as you know the nature of business is dynamic and at any moment something can come up and things can change. Staff can be off. But the lads stick together and pull through. This is maybe not ideal, but at the end of the day they do tend to get the job done, but yeah I do want consistency".

I knew at this point by Peter's response, that he was conscious of the Dictaphone recording our conversation, as this was not his typical tone or perspective on the coaches. I decided to proceed and then turn the Dictaphone off at the earliest and most convenient time to get some genuine responses!

The following couple of questions, Peter appeared reluctant to answer. I asked about *his* quality assurance manual and his intentions, "That's only a sort of basic...it's going to be tailored to what we do, but I do want it to be that in depth."

I was confused, this wasn't a basic manual! It was very much a detailed quality assurance model.

I asked, "Are we going to try and implement this?" I needed clarity. Peter sat back, "No, no, it was just something I put together on the weekend. Just to kind of see how we could, maybe be structuring a quality assurance manual and having all the appendices, like the feedback sheets attached. So it's a generic pack for everyone to say, "this is what we need to be working from/towards. That can be adapted for staff, with whoever, needs to look at it, can adapt it". I responded, "Great, it appeared a little top down, and we haven't had a chance to speak about this." "No not at all, it's about getting it right. The people on the

ground are going to need to be the ones most comfortable with this.” This was great news and sounded ideal, maybe too ideal.

I moved the conversation towards some of the coaches concerns regarding job specifications and TOIL.

These were really issues raised by the coaching team on several occasions. This was a significant working practice issue that Peter needed to know about and have the opportunity to deal with.

“I certainly don’t get TOIL, so it doesn’t make any difference to me,” Peter responded. I clarified, “there just seems to be a sense of dissatisfaction amongst the coaches.” Peter took a second, “TOIL is a sensitive area to be fair. You know they have always had TOIL and it is certainly a worthwhile extra, if you like. But at the same time we have had people abusing it as well. So it works both ways. We need a balance and to help them [the coaches] manage their time more effectively.”

Peter’s approach, to punish everyone instead of dealing with the coaches taking the piss is a little disappointing. Whilst his talk for support with time management support is laudable, he hasn’t shown me anything (since 2006!) to suggest he would actually provide training or support. Peter didn’t really seem to appreciate the challenges and difficulties the coaching staff faced. It seemed that he had lost touch.

It seemed important to explain to Peter why I have fed this back. This is important to him as he is the manager, he can change this or at least manage the coach expectations on their issues as we attempt to implement the change strategy, “I felt that I needed to feed all this back, because I spoke to coaches, some would laugh and say that they were being abused in this situation.” “Is that the word they used ‘abused?’” Peter asked. I responded, “Yes. There still seems to be a massive drive for the coaches to do their job. They seem to love it and are 100% committed, but when we spoke they highlighted their unhappiness and neglect.”

[...there was a long silence.]

“In what respect, neglect?”, “well, they felt they were being whacked [given lots of additional jobs to do] with extra hours each week.”

[...another long silence.]

I broke in, “what do you think about this?”

[...silence.]

“Errrrm. I personally think that is harsh at the end of the day, but obviously it needs to be looked into a little bit. There’s plenty of flexibility for all the staff. I know that I have been involved in everything that they do at the end of the day. No one can pull the wool over my eyes at the end of the day.

I stayed quiet as Peter spoke, but I wanted to shout, “Are you joking! You have been through everything that the coaches are actually up to...who are you kidding!” His memory didn’t appear to recall his distinct shock within the Study 2, Part I focus group, as I fed back information on poor coaching practice.

“Errrrm...that’s why I am a little...errrrm”. Peter was taking this personally, but it wasn’t the case (to an extent), it was about the change strategy, I assured him, “This is a big issue Peter. It will need to be addressed in order to move forward with the quality assurance model”.

[...long silence. 27 seconds.]

I stepped in again (I had to), “So I know the QA model you put together hit on some of these things (i.e., contract reviews and all these types of things). So I don’t know whether the coaches are being ‘abused’ or whether they are not.” I think I was trying to get him to

say something here. It worked, “Just to step in there, I think abused is certainly the wrong word to use. That is definitely the wrong word to use. In terms of this feedback though. This is all well and good yeah, but if we don’t know who is making these suggestions then there is nothing we can do about it.”

Peter (yet again) was preparing for a witch hunt. I explained, “these are the coaches words, from a group of coaches”, Peter persisted, “Individual?”. I responded calmly, “No from a group of coaches”.

We ended up going round in circles, before Peter exclaimed, “Right, I want Simon involved in this now and on top of it.” I don’t think he was absorbing this information at all. We agreed I would produce a report/update for him (which you can read in Appendix J).

As soon as the Dictaphone was off the atmosphere and Peter’s tone changed completely. He stood up looking through his blinds, “I am very upset Dan. I know who you have spoken to.” The fact that Peter was still looking to single people out was beyond me. I was beginning to lose faith in his ability to reflect and take a critical perspective.

Regardless of Peter feeling the need to pinpoint and uncover the coaches involved, I would not be involved in breaking confidentiality and in turn the trust of the coaches. Peter knew this, his repeated attempts were fruitless and pathetic.

He sat down and grabbed a piece of paper and began to sketch, “You see Dan, there is me and Gary and all these projects. I can’t do everything. Training is not the responsibility of the club it’s the responsibility of the coaches.” Peter drew out a very complex organisational chart, and before I had the chance to step in, he recounted the complexities he faced becoming an FA Level 1 assessor... “it took me 5 years. And I guess that’s the difference between me and Gary and the coaches. They haven’t got that drive and they want more money.”

Peter highlighted how this diagram kept expanding and his time wasn’t. This was important, and I could understand this. Whilst I personally didn’t agree with everything Peter did, he did have a huge task on his hands, but he wasn’t doing anything to deal with this. FitC was changing! Despite this, what was he talking about with regards to the training being the responsibility of the coaches...this was a ludicrous statement. In my head I wanted to grab a piece of paper myself and show where Simon’s 38 hours work and £17,000 per year left him every month in terms of money and family time. I was astonished by this outburst, but it continued...Simon didn’t have Peter’s wage packet, company car and work phone.

“I know exactly what they [the coaches] get up to and that that they do,” Peter’s comments surprised me further, as he had no idea of the realities of working practice by the coaches until the focus group meeting in Study 2. “If people throw something, or some work on my desk, I say ‘bring it on’, I will take it on and get it done, I am not afraid to work 8 til 8 everyday to get my job done. These coaches won’t do that kind of thing. They won’t do that extra bit of work. They haven’t got the drive and commitment to their work.” At this point I realised Peter had lost it a little and certainly showed he had totally lost any understanding or empathy for the role of the coaches.

Peter highlighted that he would start doing his own coaching observations, but undercover. Standing back up he assured me, “if these coaches are not happy and won’t bring it up with me. Then they can just go.”

Aside from some of the ridiculous statements Peter had made, which proved to me that he was unaware of the commitment and day-to-day existence of his coaching staff, I tried to step back. Why on earth, was Peter making this relatively simple change strategy difficult? This was straight forward, but yet again – shit (the contextual, political and personal kind) was getting in the way!

Peter failed to take on board any of the coaches' comments and issues. He could not accept them. Instead he chose to create excuses, create comparisons and attempt to identify the coaches involved. Action research focuses on the development of practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile (human) purposes (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). To this end, Peter appeared unprepared (or he was unable) to adopt a critical lens, despite my subtle efforts (and more blatant efforts) for reason, which simply created conflict for Peter (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Peter was not displaying the skill base required to manage the change strategy and the community department on a day-to-day basis.

Navigating the key change person

Monday 14 April – 13:55

I arrive in the Park End car park, pulling up next to Peter, as he is exiting his car, “what are you here for Dan, the community?” “Well, I believe I was here to meet you and Simon?” Peter knew we had a meeting, but for some reason he played like he never knew.

As we walked in it became apparent Simon was missing in action! Peter was not impressed, but headed to his office leaving me with the coaches. After 45 minutes of catching up on projects with the coaches...

I realised that all the meetings Peter had arrived late for or cancelled had helped develop my relationships and rapport with the coaches within the office. Like this 45minutes of 'chewing the fat', the coaches and I are continually assessing one another's credibility, sharing projects concepts, ideas and future aspirations.

...I popped in to see Peter, “Can we catch up please?” I asked. Peter shot straight back, “I will speak with Simon and you can take it up with him.”

What do I take up with Simon? All the coaches' issues, the quality assurance model? I explained, “I think we should meet with Simon and plan to deal with some of the issues we have discussed?” “Dan I am just too busy, I can't do it right now, I have a million and one things on my list to do and this is too far down.”

At this point my attempts to monitor progress and overcome barriers and challenges with Peter were heading no-where.

I was getting tired of this, so I stepped inside and asked Peter, almost in a last attempt to stir some responsibility, realisation, reflection... “Peter, when we sat down and I fed back all the info to you and Gary you chose the quality assurance model as your change strategy, you thought you needed it. You run a coaching service, and there were elements not running well. If I went out now and studied 6 coaches again and their sessions for 16 weeks, what would I come back with?” Peter just sat back, “I don't know I haven't been to watch them”, I continued, “and we haven't made any changes. If it was important to you then, why is it not important to you now?” Peter, “I just haven't got the time.”

The conversation continued and Peter spoke about Simon's role. He explained he would arrange a meeting for Simon to present a quality assurance model to the coaches, “Dan, we are past the research thing, you need to use your skills to make this happen.” I explained

that it was not my role to do this for him, to which he responded, “Well I have arranged a meeting, the coaches might come, they might not. I have been arranging a weekly coaches’ meeting and no one turns up to that.” I question why his coaches don’t show, Peter responded defensively, “this is the type of business we are in, things just pop up. I end up saying the same things over and over 10 times.” I suggest [in jest, but with straight face] maybe just focusing on getting coaches to meetings!

I sense that Peter loves dealing with the day-to-day business of meetings or fire-fighting as he and Gary would put it. If a manager cannot get coaches to the coaching meetings then surely there is something not right, this is something to make you question the relationship and working environment within EitC. The complete lack of action, planning or vision was disheartening and I couldn’t help but think I have done my best, but cannot take this any further - with Peter.

Monday 19 May 2008

The research (and trust for that matter) is probably at its slowest right now. Peter has gone very quiet, but on a separate (more positive) note Phil and Mike have been meeting with me.

I wasn’t driving these meetings, but ever since the initial coaches’ meetings these lads wanted to make change happen anyway. It wasn’t the quality assurance model, but in Mike’s words, “if we [the coaches] don’t do something, who will? Those arseholes [senior management] won’t.”

The meetings and interaction with Phil and Mike were informal and infrequent. It was when we could. I was reassured around these two. They were genuine, in that they knew what was right. Or specifically, they felt they knew they could work better and help more people more effectively through their football development work.

We had in our meetings shared our aspirations for improvements in working practice, research and evaluation and in terms of moving EitC forward...our conversations were full of ideas, enthusiasm and urgency to take action.

My role and ability in trying to encourage Peter to reflect upon new working strategies, with the intention to stimulating thinking towards an action or change strategy, was failing. As opposed to attempting to tackle these issues Peter was choosing to simply ‘get rid of them’ (i.e., the coaches) rather than deal with them. It was apparent that Peter would no longer continue to be the key change person in the research. No longer could I keep asking about progress and going around in circles – it had been 7 months. As I informally closed the door on Peter I harboured concerns that his source of resistance to change was primarily motivated to maintain the continuation of the status quo within EitC (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990). Some of Gary and Peters comments during Study 2 concerning the growth of EitC and the obvious challenges Peter was facing led me to consider the role commercialisation has played on community sport.

The commercialisation of sport, increase in professionalism and increased government funding for sport/football for social change was changing the landscape of FitC creating a rapid growth (Zimmerman, 1997; Robinson, 1999; Reade, 2000), which had also created change within EitC, and, in some respects, taking them into the unknown. Peter lacked the requisite skill base to enter into an unknown or into the new era (McGuire and Fenoglio, 2004). Laughlin (1991) stated that no organisation is ever in a state of inertia. Due to external factors (i.e., commercialisation and government funding) EitC were already in a complex state of change. In this regard, EitC had moved from traditional football development work, experience rapid growth (i.e., in access to resources) and are now working on complex social issues (i.e., health, obesity, social inclusion, education). Peter could just about deal with his own the day-to-day existence, let alone initiate potential change (i.e., the change strategy) (Evans, 1994). Peter needed to deal with his own personal change prior to this change strategy (Evans, 1994). Perhaps he would rather have stayed in an era where FitC programmes working on football development without anyone talking about quality, research and evaluation and evidence based practice, as time where he could have still 'gone out' and coached. However, one could argue that he lacked the accountability, or 'self accountability' displayed by Phil and Mike, as he was a manager rather than delivering on 'on the ground' (Fry, 1995; Chisolm, 1995; Cornwall, Lucas and Pasteur, 2000). This certainly, supported the concerns that he had lost touch of the realities of the day-to-day existence of his coaches. It was also clear, that he lacked the ability to readily develop a critical approach in a place where coaches were already 'acting' and ready for change (Kemmis, 2001).

Senior management departure

In July 2008, I received notification that Gary James of the senior management team had departed EitC. During my time working with Gary, I was pleased to see his work bring sustainability to such a fast growing charity was laudable. I felt a personal sadness at this news.

This left the organisation in a state of shock for some time with many coaches and staff with job insecurities. Apparently, Gary's replacement (Martin) had a human resource background and fierce reputation (for dismissing people). This created a new anxiety amongst the staff, who were concerned about their job security. Whilst I empathised with my collaborators, colleagues and (now) friends, I also realised that, from a research perspective, we had lost a critical friend. Gary was a key ally and this was a major blow given the complex issues I was experiencing with Peter. I had established rapport and acceptance amongst EitC staff, but I needed someone to drive the change strategy forward from within...

Tuesday 12 August 2008

Today Mike and I had been invited to attend a strategic meeting concerning funding for health projects delivered within EitC. I was pleased to be invited and that I would be able to support the organisation with this. There were no senior managers present, which was not a surprise at this point.

Mike and I car shared on route to the meeting and in our usual preamble before meetings discussed our approach, "What do we want from this meeting, mate?", I asked. "I think we need to go for everything we have been discussing. We need a leader for health, someone to lead funding applications, new projects, someone who manage the research across the projects too", I agree adding, "someone who can develop evidence based practice too". "Yes, we just need the funding for this. It's a huge position and we just don't have people with the skills to do this sort stuff yet", replied Mike. Mike and I knew that this would be an important meeting for us both and the charity if we could pull off a success.

Over the previous months Phil, Mike and I had developed a close rapport and friendship, built on shared interests and importantly aspiration to enhance the effectiveness of EitC. During this time, senior management have taken a 'step back' away from strategic meetings and indeed the change strategy. Mike appeared to have more time to commit to this more 'strategic' or direction thinking, as Phil's position also grow bigger and his time was limited. It's important to note that at this point, such aspirations and eagerness [from Phil and Mike] to make things better were not because senior management had asked them to drive this, it was more important than that...it was personal to them.

Making change happen

Remarkably, in September 2009 Martin the new senior manager (amicably) departed EitC adding to the extensive period of 'turmoil' and evident 'revolving door' culture. This played a major role in further embedding insecurity and anxiety across all of the coaches and senior management included and coaches within EitC. It was during this period of uncertainty that the researcher found that the more respected and influential community coaches with a shared vision had led

the other coaches through the senior management and job security crisis. Mike, an EitC community coach commented, “as soon as we start getting somewhere and begin to settle, they (senior management) leave and we (the staff) are left to steady the ship ...”

I had at this point been working with Mike (a community coach with shared aspirations for better practice) regularly. We had been working together (along with Phil when possible) for some time developing or at least aspiring to see through some positive change. We ‘informally’ decided to ‘make things happen’, otherwise (we agreed) we wouldn’t get this (or anything of any worth) done. Peter wasn’t doing anything; it became apparent he wasn’t empowered or respected to do anything. Besides, he was also fretting over his future. Mike (and I) proposed that the new quality assurance model should be ready prior to any new senior manager appointment. Mike’s assertiveness was a welcome relief. He appeared to have the respect and support of the other coaches. Mike had ‘stepped up’ as the new key change person and I felt comfortable that he would be more able to help see through the change.

Mike and a number of other community coaches began to share their beliefs and maintained focus. Ultimately, these characters, especially Mike, had begun to drive the organisation forward, despite the absence of continuity in senior management.

The ‘change’ didn’t happen overnight. I spent many long meetings, both formally and informally with Mike debating and discussing the role of EitC [in the absence of senior management]. We discussed strategic and operational targets, how they could be achieved and ways in which ‘we’ (EitC and I) could be innovative and lead the way in best practice. It was during these meetings that we both recognised our shared aspirations and visions to take EitC forward. The emergence of such a character was indeed fortuitous. The ability to create rapport and closeness with him enabled such visions to be shared. It must be recognised that this was only realised as a result of prolonged engagement.

Monday 24 November 2008 – 9am

Mike has arranged a staff meeting to disseminate information on a new funding stream available via the Premier League Creating Chances fund. This fund was all about men’s health. Mike and I had an idea this project would be coming up and we had ideas about how we could deliver something novel.

Interestingly, Mike role has evolved whilst Martin was in tenure. His remit involved securing funding through applications and partnerships across the charity (but remained a disability coach). I was pleased Mike had received the recognition for his hard work and commitment.

We all squashed around the kitchen table in EitC. It was a busy morning and there were very few coaches missing, I would say there were 12 people around the table including Peter [which was a surprise given he had been off the radar for some time]. As conversation began, various projects leads began to offer insights into how they could use an extra £5k to do small projects for men’s health to whittle away the £30k per year (for 3 years which was available).

As I listened and watched this scene unfold, it was clear that Peter was more than happy to 'absorb' the funding into existing projects rather than commit to something new, novel or see through some of the more aspirational ideas we had discussed.

After 30 minutes of very little progress had been made, so I decided to offer up my opinion, "I think we have two options, a) absorb the funding in existing projects or b) employ someone with the skill set who can promote men's health strategically across EitC, promote best practice and evidence based practice and be able to do some research and evaluation. I even think we can get match funding [an additional £30k funding] for the £30k too". Peter did not hesitate to express his apprehension surrounding trying to get match funding. Thankfully, Mike (and a couple of other coaches) was with me and expressed his support. I added, "We are about making a difference, I think this would be a huge step for us, but it's a much needed step".

Peters apprehension was no surprise, this was just too new for him, too far out of his comfort zone (still!). Mike and the coach's support showed that amongst the coaches and practitioners there was a deep rooted aspiration to make positive changes to benefit the organisation. In this regard, their [the coaches] senior manager was not interested in doing something novel to benefit the charity, but they [the coaches] could see this would benefit EitC and were ready and willing to support.

Following this meeting, we took direct action change the recruitment process. We began recruiting people with the required and relevant skill base to complete the job. Those who could deliver as a coach, but also collect data [research and evaluation], as opposed to the traditional football coach with an FA Level 2 qualifications. In a place that is entrenched in doing the same thing because it's what's always been done, such aspiration and enthusiasm was refreshing to hear and finally we had action!

Mike commented "...we need people with the right skills to implement evidence based practice and to understand and evaluate the impact we have. To take us [EitC] forward we need to make these changes across all projects...."

Interestingly, people listened, took interest in and wanted to be involved in what Mike was talking about... Coaches [not senior management] wanted to develop their skills and education in new courses outside traditional football coaching qualifications; they wanted to learn from other projects and try to understand evidenced based practice.

The process of reflection on practice had created a greater ability to deliver on this sense of accountability the coaches felt towards their clients (people within the community they serve) (Fry, 1995; Chisolm, 1995; Cornwall, Lucas and Pasteur, 2000). This genuine approach was a re-occurring theme highlighted by coaches throughout the research. By November 2009 (29 months into the change strategy) given the ongoing senior management uncertainty we (i.e., the researcher and community coaches) did not manage to roll out the quality assurance model. However, we had all contributed towards making changes happen affecting recruitment, the philosophy of coaches, the utilisation of evidenced based practice and the development of a

culture of monitoring and evaluation, which would in turn (likely) enhance delivery ‘on the ground’ within coaching and health based interventions.

5.7. Summary

The aims for this chapter was for the author to:

- (e) Act as facilitator for senior management in managing the change strategy across the organisation.**

It was evident that Peter Conn attempted to engage in procedural change. In this sense, Peter tried to move forward with the change strategy identified within the action meeting in Study 2. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) explained that the gauge of achievement should be inextricably linked with the participants’ strong and authentic sense of development, coupled with an evolution in practice and enhanced awareness within the environment within which they operate. Peter failed to do this, as he appeared to busy ‘doing’ rather than being strategic. The prolonged ethnographic engagement allowed for deep observation of Peter’s role as a senior manager within EitC. The observations allowed the author to better understand the nature of the environment within EitC and the personal skills and experiences of Peter. A closeness developed that would support a rapport whereby dialogue, honesty, disclosure and behaviours would not ordinarily be observed (Krane and Baird, 2005). As Peter attempted the change strategy, refined the change strategy and then made further attempts to elicit change, he was faced with political, situational, contextual and personal barriers to implementing the change. As Peter struggled to reflect, refine and/or develop the change strategy, I was left questioning Peter’s role as the key change person in the research. I am sure Peter would have felt differently, maybe relieved it was all over or even harbouring a top down approach to a quality assurance model.

Peter Conn

It was evident throughout the research that Peter had the power to determine the direction, pace, degree of innovation, or change. As Peter moved towards his original change strategy (as outlined in Study 2) and one that he developed (with Gary). It appeared that he didn't have the willingness nor did he have the power or ability to see this (larger and extended) change strategy through (i.e., across the LSSP coaches). Despite numerous attempts (by the author and others) to navigate the focus of the change strategy to a more legitimate source (i.e., the internal EitC coaches), he persevered with this change strategy during the initial parts of the action phase. In a process structured to minimise intrusions of self-presentation and self-esteem, which may be evidenced within politically inequitable situations (or relatively powerless situations) Peter had exposed himself to such situations. Peter was in control and had the 'power', but he lacked the skill base (or the ability to choose an effective change strategy) and/or will to fully commit to the change strategy. Whilst the focus of change was refined (i.e., moved from the LSSP coaches to EitC internal coaches), this was more by accident rather than strategic intent or a reflective redirection by Peter. More often than not Peter was unwilling to give the time or commitment required to deliver on the change strategy. This position raised concerns that Peter was primarily politically motivated, as his behaviour reflected one geared towards self-interest and a continuation of the status quo within EitC (Macintosh and Whitson, 1990). It is important at this point to consider change management and the broader current political and economic context.

External disturbances to EitC

Commercialisation has impacted professional sport clubs in many ways, helping business becoming more effective and to increase revenue. The not-for-profit sector has not been unaffected by commercialisation. These organisations have undergone substantial culture and operational changes. This has included managers becoming more businesslike, affecting decision

making and organisational strategies (Zimmerman, 1997; Robinson, 1999). Similarly, sport and particularly football has received widespread acclaim to contribute positively to a multitude of societal outcomes. Unprecedented amounts of public and private money in recent times (1997-2006) have been targeted at FitC (including EitC) departments. In this regard, the initial focus of FitC programmes has evolved from building bridges between football clubs and their local communities primarily through the provision of sporting opportunities and player appearances (Mellor, 2001; Reade, 2000) to working across a wide variety of complex social agendas such as health and education. This has contributed to the substantial growth in the work undertaken by EitC, as Peter explained on several occasions, but this first emerged with Gary in Study 2, Part II:

GJ: We need more than that, coach education or coach quality assurance. What's happened in a nutshell, is that we have grown exponentially. With that we have brought in staff, that have either had to adapt or we have inherited staff from old systems. Because of the growth, and to use this analogy, we have put out the 'big fires', now we need to run back and put out the small fires that are re-occurring....quality assurance has to be number one. This is something that we have only just got to grips with and be able to identify. Because the growth has been so fast and so quick, so we need quality assurance.

This unprecedented growth doesn't appear to have been afforded the appropriate support. As McGuire and Fenoglio (2004) note, officers working in FitC programmes often have little or no training in research and evaluation and that there is a need to up-skill and empower staff (and coaches). Furthermore, it is evident from Study 1 (i.e., the reconnaissance phase) that a number of factors such as recruitment and professional development have not sufficiently 'caught up' within EitC to meet the current demands of their work force and working/coaching agendas.

Laughlin (1991) stated that no organisation is ever in a state of inertia. It appeared that due to external factors (i.e., commercialisation and government funding) EitC were already in a complex state of change. In this regard, EitC had moved from traditional football development work,

experienced rapid growth (i.e., through access to resources) and are now working on complex social issues (i.e., health, obesity, social inclusion, education). It appeared that Peter could just about deal with his own the day-to-day existence, let alone initiate potential change (i.e., the change strategy) (Evans, 1994). Peter's relatively hectic and complex world would ultimately be the catalyst for prompting both his and Gary's attempts to deflect and externalise the change strategy (Laughlin, 1991; Gray et al., 1995). I was left with a feeling that their approach to change lacked the authentic sense of development and evolution in practice that was associated with success in action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2001) and important the skill base to work in his environment effectively.

Navigating change to the power brokers

As the research evolved it became apparent that further issues emerged that questioned Peter's empowerment, management ability and empathy towards and understanding of the existence of the coaches' day-to-day practice. On several occasions, Peter appeared unable to accept the discontent and views of the coaching staff. As the process of action research continued our meetings and correspondence focused on the development of practical knowledge (Reason and Bradbury, 2001), however the cyclical process of reflection had broken down (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004). In this regard, Peter stopped failed to bring new ways to change to the meetings and wouldn't considering other ways to least move forward (espoused by McFee, 1993), but focused on removing issues and people. Whilst, one may suggest 'this is business' and Peter was dealing with this as he saw fit, this was not the agreed change strategy nor the nature of change in which the research collaboration had developed. Most importantly, seeing through positive change became increasingly less likely whilst Peter remained the key change person.

Gilbourne (2001) suggested that reflection on current practice can act to encourage debate among practitioners/coaches and help facilitate ideas relating to practice, which can be shared. Whilst the research and change strategy continued with Peter, the role of the author focused on persuasion rather than facilitation. Though developing a relationship, rapport and engaging within formal and informal discourse, between the author and the coaches (especially Mike) it became apparent that they were already addressing *their* workplace problems and were already committed to their own change. This discourse and debate between the author and coaches allowed for (as Gilbourne, 2001 suggested) reflection on current practice, which encouraged debate among the coaches. This facilitated ideas relating to practice, which were shared. Through Mike the author had found his new key change person.

Social psychologist Kurt Lewins (1951) force field analysis provides a framework for examining factors that influence a social phenomenon. This model has been used to consider organisational situations and organisational change (McShane, 2006). Central to this framework is the concept of driving and opposing forces creating tension as individuals either push for or offer resistance to change within the organisation. Mike and the coaches would be considered driving forces that work in favour of a given change. Conversely, Peter may be considered as an opposing force (wittingly or unwittingly) that works against the change, and supports the status quo. At this juncture, it appears relevant to consider the power and empowerment issues that surrounded the change strategy in order to understand how (somehow) change emerged.

Bradshaw's (1998) framework of power (building on some of limitations of the rational traditions inherent in Lewin's (1951) perspective) is built on considerations of organisational power and multiple ways for organisational change or transformation to occur. She argues that 'tensions of difference' are important to understanding the richness and multiple sources of power that can mobilise different paths toward change. Given the emergence of Mike and the coaches, as the key people in the development of the change, this perspective is particularly

valuable. Bradshaw's framework allows for the examination of tensions regarding change efforts to create more democratic, equitable, inclusive, and socially responsible change within the organisation (Bradshaw, 1998).

Bradshaw argued that two key dimensions of power must be considered: (1) personal/individual-collective/group, and (2) surface-deep. The former dimension represents a more traditional perspective which recognises that power is held by individuals and groups. The latter dimension represents a critical, interpretive perspective which recognises that power is not only observable at a surface level, but also exists in deep structures, systems, or discourses. The dimensions intersect to represent four fundamentally different assumptions about power at the surface-individual, surface-group, deep-individual, and deep-group levels, and their respective paths toward change (Bradshaw, 1998).

Surface-individual power is visibly manifested through personal action. Bradshaw (1998, p. 124) noted that "power rests in the behaviours, skills, possessions, and qualities of an active, knowing agent," and change occurs when individuals exert their skill and will. This certainly appeared the case as Mike and the coaches expressed their dissatisfaction with senior management and their willingness to make (and lead) change, "if we [the coaches] don't do something, who will? Those arseholes [senior management] won't". Using Bradshaw's (1998) framework it also appears that Mike and the coaches displayed deep-individual power (i.e., a latent or even subconscious power that is embedded in the psyche of the individual, based on one's own values and beliefs, and critical consciousness). In this regard, they referred to their job being 'more than a job', more a vocation. Indeed, on many occasions they showed commitment far beyond their remit and responsibility. This personal power, will and commitment to make things happen challenged the status quo (or inertia) that senior management appeared content with. Moreover, and specifically Mike, in the midst of job insecurity and in the absence of key senior management figures

challenged and saw through changes in human resource management for the greater good of the organisation.

The coaches demonstrated social accountability for their clients and communities that they serve through their actions and commitments. The coaches appeared to take responsibility for themselves and their work, striving to meet external expectations and their own internal personal felt responsibility (Cornwall, Lucas and Pasteur, 2000; Chisolm, 1995; Fry, 1995). Already making self directed change to become more transparent, answerable and compliant the coaches were ready for change (Ebrahim and Weiband, 2007). This need for change wasn't about pragmatics, but more of a philosophical change about 'where they wanted to go'. They knew they were 'making a difference'; however they didn't have the skill base internally to capture this with research and evaluation, so they recognised the need to take action to deal with this. They were in this sense, eager and ready to make changes to improve their working practice to enhance their work. In the words of Mike: "you just want your project to be bigger and better and more successful."

The coaches working 'on the ground' were just as aware as senior management of the changes that occurred environmentally that were fuelling the growth of EitC as an organisation. Moreover, Mike sensed throughout the research that the political and economic changes apparent in society at this time of 'unprecedented' funding would (and to extent had) come to an end. Mike and the coaches appeared to be forward thinkers, recognising the need for achievable outcomes and clear evaluation techniques, or more transparent and answerable as described by Ebrahim and Weiband (2007). This was something Coalter (2007) found to be rare in sport development departments. Mike understood that if funding for sport/football based initiatives is reduced, the competition for the limited resources would intensify. Mike (and other coaches) understood this. They wanted to be in a position to evidence the impact of their work to ensure they could compete and win funds to continue their community work in the future.

Furthermore, Mike and the coaches appeared to create their own evolutionary change (i.e., the most desirable form of change), as it embodied an open and free (genuine) discourse about where an organisation is going (Laughlin, 1991). It appeared that a common organisational expectation was formed based upon shared values, which can take years to complete (Laughlin, 1991).

As Skinner et al. (1999) and Gray et al. (1995) noted Laughlin's model of organisational change failed to fully explain the complex phenomena (of change management) to a simple explanation encapsulated in an idealised typology. However, adopting a prolonged ethnographic research allowed for a multi-layered conception of organisational change, how it was implemented rejected and emerged within EitC.

CHAPTER 6

6.0. Discussion

This chapter will reflect on the original aims of the research and discuss the emergent salient points. The practical implications that the research findings have for policy and practice will be discussed alongside recommendations for the design and delivery of intervention and research within FitC and the broader domain of community sport and health. Throughout this section I will revisit and explore the procedural tenets of action research in addition to my own development and location as a researcher-practitioner and the experiences of adopting a mixed method approach. The strengths and limitations of this research will also be considered and recommendations for future research will be presented.

6.1. Main research aim

The purpose of this thesis was to understand the effectiveness of a FitC programme (EitC) in promoting health in its local community. To support future sport and football based health interventions delivered within FitC and inform broader sport based health improvement policy. This collaborative action research project will offer an in-depth insight into the working practice of a FitC programme and develop collaborative action (or ways forward) to enhance the organisations effectiveness delivering health improvement services through football.

Listed below are the research aims and objectives:

Aim 1: Reconnaissance Phase: Explore the effectiveness of a football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the broader working practice within EitC.

Aim 2: Action Planning: In collaboration with senior management with EitC reflect on the effectiveness of the results from the reconnaissance phase with a view to creating meaningful and positive actions (or ways forward) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.

Aim 3: Implementation and Monitoring Phase: Facilitate senior management in managing positive change within and across the organisation.

Thesis Objectives

The above aims will be achieved through the following objectives:

Objective 1: Reconnaissance Phase:

- I. Conduct a multi-method intervention evaluation of EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.
- II. Explore working practice and factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention.

Objective 2: Action Planning:

- III. To develop a dissemination event for senior management within EitC to feedback findings from the reconnaissance phase and generate meaningful ways forward (or actions) to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.
- IV. To collate and distribute potential actions before hosting an action meeting to discuss and confirm plausible ways forward.

Objective 3: Implementation and Monitoring Phase:

- V. To facilitate senior management in moving forward in order to improve working practice and enhance the effectiveness of the organisation.

In order to achieve this aim the research has adopted a mixed method collaborative action research approach. The researcher has adopted a range of positions throughout the research in order to achieve the aims of the thesis. Within the reconnaissance phase (Study 1) the researcher was positioned within EitC's school based community interventions and within the fabric of the organisation working with children, teachers, schools, EitC coaches and EitC senior management. Throughout the action planning phase (Study 2) the researcher was positioned to work directly with senior management. Within the final, implementation and monitoring phase

the research worked directly with senior management and coaches within EitC (Study 3). Between August 2006 to June 2007 the researcher operated on a part time basis within the research (typically 2 days per week), before moving to a full time basis between October 2007 to November 2009 (typically 5 days per week).

6.2. Chapter 3, Study 1 (reconnaissance phase)

Chapter 3 outlined the first research study (i.e., Study 1), which explored the effectiveness of a football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the broader working practice within EitC. This chapter formed the *reconnaissance phase* of the action research procedure (Carr and Kemmis, 1986), where the results were presented and discussed in two parts (Part A and B). Part A concerned a multi-method intervention evaluation of EitC's football oriented school based community coaching intervention. Part B focused on the exploration of working practice and factors that contributed to the effectiveness of the EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention. The reconnaissance phase spanned across a 10-month period (August 2006 – June 2007), which included the researcher delving into the complexities of a 16-week long intervention to ascertain the effectiveness of such interventions delivered by EitC across 4 Liverpool Primary Schools. Familiarisation and continued engagement required the researcher to go 'native' by submerging himself into the culture of the Football in the Community (FitC) coaches' (or practitioners') environment (i.e., EitC and school setting). The principles of ethnography were adopted to undertake prolonged fieldwork with extensive observation in the natural setting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Eder and Corsaro, 1999). The researcher attempted to develop a clear understanding of what daily life was like for the practitioners, become accustomed to and understand the physical and institutional settings in which they lived, the daily routine of activities, the beliefs that guided their actions and the linguistic and other semiotic systems that mediated all their contexts and

activities (Eder and Corsaro, 1999). Participant observations were utilised in a variety of settings throughout the study (Lofland and Lofland, 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 and Tedlock, 2000), in order to balance the notions of engagement and trust, whilst adopting an (initially) objective lens. The researcher then actively engaged in both observation and participation and participant-observation (Hong and Duff, 2002).

To fully understand the effectiveness of the intervention from the children's perspective a range of approaches were adopted. Oakley et al. (1995) highlighted that the collection of information from children required 'a special approach'. The approach adopted here involved the utilisation of the researcher's diverse skill set (i.e., the use of age-appropriate language alongside fun yet informative tasks), and different research methods (Mahon et al., 1996). To build a clear picture of children's beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and barriers to physical activity a consolidation of methods was required (i.e., methods that best accommodate children) (Porcellato et al., 1999). This between-methods (i.e., write and draw, focus groups and pedometer data) triangulation approach allowed for the research to utilise both quantitative and qualitative methods to better understand the behaviour and activity profiles of children (Cohen and Manion, 1994). This approach allowed for a thorough representation of the experiences of the children involved. Moreover, Breitmayer et al., (1993) highlighted that the outcomes from each approach can be used to cross-validate the research findings, subsequently enhancing confidence and rigour in the results. The measurements of stature and body mass of each child participant were taken, to calculate BMI (kg/m^2). Child specific focus groups (Frey and Fontana, 1991), write and draw inquiry (Porcellato et al., 1999) and pedometer scores (Stewart, 2004) within physical activity diaries (Boddy et al., 2006) were also utilised with the child participants.

Throughout the reconnaissance phase the researcher's personal reflections and observations were recorded through informal field notes and a reflective diary. The informal field notes were continually developed in an attempt to capture the context, culture and practice of EitC (McFee,

1992; Krane & Baird, 2005). When the researcher felt a more flexible method of data collection was needed (for example, if it was deemed that formal note taking may jeopardise the quality of conversation and/or a sense of unease with what the researcher is up to) mental notes were made. These mental notes were typical key words and quotes from participants (i.e., children, teachers, parents, EitC coaches, senior management) were jotted on a pad (Lofland, 1995) and developed at the end of the day in detailed reflective field notes (Lofland, 1995).

6.3. Chapter 4, Study 2 (action planning)

The aim of this phase of the research was to explore the emerging themes from the reconnaissance phase with regards to the effectiveness of the EitC football oriented school based community coaching intervention in health improvement and the working practices evident within EitC coaching staff. Study 1 focused on both the effectiveness of the intervention and the working practices of those individuals (i.e., coaches) operating within the intervention, alongside exploring their individual working environment (i.e., EitC). The role of the EitC coach appeared significant in contributing to the fluency of coaching sessions and in turn the overall effectiveness of the intervention. It was apparent that positive changes were required in the working practice of EitC.

Study 2, Part I utilised a focus group approach for the purpose of disseminating the findings from the reconnaissance phase to inform senior management (n=2) within EitC. Focus groups have been championed as a method for informing the planning of research, or to provide summative and/or formative evaluation of research, whilst offering a versatile data collection technique (Basch, 1987). The focus group has been highlighted as a method to yield more and richer information (than individual interviews) (Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981) and often utilised once considerable research has already been undertaken. The stimulating and flexible nature of focus groups allows for dialogue to develop and emerge with subsequent opportunities for

intensive exploration of opinions, feelings, attitudes and behaviours (Murphy et al., 1992). Basch (1987) noted that ascertaining the participant's perspectives of research (whilst infrequent) can offer a unique and relevant viewpoint to clarify meaning, implications and context surrounding research findings (Basch, 1987; p437). The focus group sought to encourage senior management to engage in reflection and open dialogue, offering interpretations and/or explanations. Throughout the focus group process senior management were encouraged to consider potential mechanisms to move forward and enhance working practice pertaining to the emergent issues highlighted and discussed in line within the processes of action research.

It was explained to the participants involved in the focus groups that they were not being judged by the researcher or facilitator (Marquardt et al., 2009) and that I (the researcher) was seeking to build upon the familiarity, which was developed in the extensive reconnaissance phase. This approach was designed to enable learning and create a reflective dialogue that can lead towards the development of mechanisms to move forward. The focus groups were analysed and key points were illustrated through verbatim citations (i.e., the voice and actual language of the senior management from with EitC) in order to help illustrate reactions, motivations and feelings collated from discussion (Lederman, 1990; Kitzinger, 1994). Within one week of the focus group, the researcher provided senior management with a summary report of the discussion (see Appendix H).

In line with the action research process, Study 2, Part II involved collaboration between the researcher and the researched (Tinning, 1992; McFee, 1993) and was approached as a group process rather than that of a pursuit undertaken in isolation. In line with the action research process, following the extensive reconnaissance phase of Study 1 and of Study 2, Part I (i.e., focus group with EitC senior management) the aim of Study 2, Part II was to encourage the senior management to target an explicit change strategy. This involved identifying, engaging and reflecting on a potential action before committing to a change strategy (Greenwood and Levin,

2000). Senior management (n=2) were invited to attend an *action* meeting with the researcher and a senior colleague. The purpose of this meeting was to build upon and explore the discussion created within the focus group. This process allowed for senior managers to define their own personal objectives and pool their knowledge and understanding of both the reconnaissance findings and their environment to apply what had been learnt in order to inform and create positive social change (Greenwood and Levin, 2000). Within this process senior management were encouraged to share, reflect and identify (the scale, scope and potential impact of) actions or mechanisms to move forward (McFee, 1993; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; Reason and Bradbury, 2001). The findings from both the reconnaissance phase (Study 1) and the focus group (Study 2, Part I) informed the decision making processes made throughout this action meeting. The meeting was transcribed verbatim and used alongside the summary notes from the researcher and rapporteur to provide a summary of the change strategy to the participants within a week of the action meeting taking place (see Appendix H). It appeared appropriate to present this action meeting utilising the participants own voice (verbatim) allowing for detailed insight into the decision making process involved with agreeing to a change strategy within a reflective meeting. Finally, as in Study 1 reflective ‘stop offs’, field note extracts and the researcher’s personal reflections were evidenced and incorporated throughout.

6.4. Chapter 5, Study 3 (implementation and monitoring)

These cyclical stages of reconnaissance, planning, observation and reflection make up the action research process (Elliot, 1991; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Involvement in a collaborative action research project requires a commitment to democratic social change (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). A key value shared by action researchers, then, is this abiding respect for people’s knowledge and for their ability to understand and address the issues confronting them and their communities or environment. The task should be to facilitate, support and offer a

resource for people to do things in ways that will fit their own cultural context and environment. The people (i.e., participants) should be the ones to determine the nature and operation of the things that affect their lives (Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003). Once appropriate action has been identified and agreed (i.e., by the participants and researcher) then the role of the researcher becomes one of supporting and facilitating the change strategy chosen by the participants (i.e., the senior management). An ethnographic approach was chosen for this study as it has been advocated for its flexibility in research design enabling creativity in finding the best strategies to answer research questions (Krane and Baird, 2005). Moreover, qualitative researchers have been challenged to broaden narrative strategies used in research and open up space in social science texts for a more engaged understanding of the organisations, characters and lives which we observe (Tierney, 2002; Polikinghourne, 2007; Witz, 2007). This research adopted a longitudinal ethnographic perspective continuing and building upon the ethnographic work undertaken within Study 1. Such a prolonged level of immersion and engagement allowed the author to feel, sense and (perhaps) 'awaken to the world of the other' (i.e., coaches, staff and senior management within EitC) (Wolcott, 1995; Tedlock, 2000; Witz, 2007). The author engaged in formal 'reflection and development' meetings with the participants (i.e., EitC senior management and coaches) and broader ethnographic engagement within EitC. With these interactions, the emphasis was on 'action', which is inextricably linked to reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000). This critical approach allows reflection (of a systematic kind) to enable the participants to improve practice within the workplace (Gilbourne, 2001). Typically the meetings were not recorded with a Dictaphone (however some more formal meetings were). The researcher adopted an exploratory and empathic listener approach espoused by (Rogers, 1991), but remained true to the facilitator role of action research. In this regard, the research used opportunities to clarify change strategy (i.e., ideal), revisit the purpose or aim of social change, recount the implementation process of change, the benefits and barriers to change (i.e., personal, internal, external), personal feelings related to change, to develop, review or refine the process of

change (i.e., operational or strategic) or to develop a new change strategy. As in Study 1, participant observation was utilised in a variety of settings throughout the study (Lofland and Lofland, 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 and Tedlock, 2000), in order to balance the notions of engagement and trust, whilst adopting an (initially) objective lens, the researcher then actively engaged in both observation and participation and participant-observation (Hong and Duff, 2002). The researcher's personal reflections and observations were recorded through informal field notes and a reflective diary. The informal field notes were continually developed in an attempt to capture the context, culture and practice of EitC (McFee, 1992; Krane & Baird, 2005).

These narratives are presented through a chronological approach following the action meeting (Study 2, Part II) and detail a series of collaborative case study cycles that attempt to highlight the distinct action research cycles (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Verbatim citations provide detailed insight into the working practices of the participants (including barriers and self reflections) during the process of change. It has been recommended that the author should emerge where appropriate to move the story along (Tierney, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2007). The shift from participant observation to the observation of participation enables the researcher-cum-author to present both the *self* and the *other* and the emotions of the ethnographic experience (Tedlock, 2000). This process legitimises a multi-voice dialogue and narrative (i.e., of the self and others, senior management and coaches) to occur within the text. This means representations of the senior managers, coaches and my own experiences are presented together to provide a narrative that attempts to capture the character and conversation, unique voices and the lives of individuals (see Tierney, 2002). Further to this, the inner feelings and reflections of the researcher-cum-author (i.e., myself) are represented in the narratives results (see Tedlock, 2000). The narrative aims to inform, engage and invite the reader to draw his or her own interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Davis, 2000), using the voice and reality of the

participants' existence in their own words and experiences (Polkinghorne, 1988), alongside that of that of the researchers.

6.5. Summary of findings

The thesis findings details the complexity of behaviour change whether in promoting health in children, improving coaches behaviour, influencing management approaches and engaging in an action research framework. The reconnaissance phase shows that the football oriented school based coaching intervention delivered by EitC provided excitement, enjoyment and fun for (the majority of) those children involved (and the school teachers), which sits well with other literature which supports the use of football especially for health improvement (Craig et al., 2006; Kustrup et al., 2010; Pringle et al., 2011; Richardson et al., 2011; Jenkins and James, 2012). The intervention provided an opportunity for the majority of already active children to engage in further physical activity opportunities. Whilst this positive experience is highly laudable, it appeared that due to the deficiencies (or gaps) in the coaches' skill base, that the developmental opportunity as found by other researchers (Craig et al., 1996; Reilly, Williams and Richardson, 2003) was not evidenced. Similarly, the coach and child relationship created was at times detrimental rather than to support development (Lyle, 1999; Jowett and Cockerill, 2003). Further inappropriate working practices from a management and coaching perspective notably the lack of clarity and understanding of behaviour change in health improvement meant the potential effectiveness of this intervention was limited to 'keeping active children active, through fun and enjoyable sessions'. Whilst fun and enjoyment has been highlighted as important for any sport based intervention for increased participation (Craig et al., 1996), much of the 'potential' attributed to football (and sport) (Coalter, Allinson, Taylor, 2000; Atherley, 2006; Green, 2004; Tacon, 2005, Kremer-Sadlik and Kim, 2007) was not realised. Poor coaching practice (although isolated and coach dependent) was evidenced, which appeared to be a results of poor

recruitment strategies (Potrac et al., 2002; Zeichner and Gore, 1990) and absence of relevant and specialised training opportunities or continued professional development (CPD), as found by McGuire (2008) in similar football club settings. Whilst findings allude to a number of potentially positive factors that may provide a background for such interventions to deliver positive results in community-based football projects, it is apparent that EitC may require a number of positive organisational changes to improve their effectiveness.

Following the completion of the reconnaissance phase, these above key findings and the rich and detailed context supporting the findings were presented within a focus group meeting in Study 2, Part I to EitC senior management. The key elements that emerged within the focus group was the presence of poor coaching and general working practice, which appeared to ‘ring some alarm bells’ with senior management. However, it appeared pertinent to consider the coaches’ perspective of their role. The coaches appear to be left to deliver their own content, and, at times, appear to be left without support. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the coaches’ workload was extensive (to say the least). The purpose of the focus group was to create reflect on practice and create potential and meaningful ways forward to improve working practice. Within the discussion senior management highlighted a number of potential ways forward to enhance coaching practice and in turn the effectiveness of interventions including:

- Revisit their code of conduct for their coaches.
- Develop and communicate the purpose of interventions clearly (with coaches and schools and other stakeholders).
- Coaches, teachers and schools require clearer roles and responsibility for effective intervention design and delivery.
- Develop a health improvement curricular and targeting more ‘at risk’ (i.e., overweight or obese, or inactive) children could heighten the impact of interventions.
- The use of incentives may offer benefits to maintenance within interventions.

- Recruitment, inductions initiatives and relevant CPD opportunities must be considered for EitC coaches.
- Reflective practice may be a useful method for coaches to enhance working (and coaching) practice.

Following Study 2, Part I, I presented the discussion and proposed ways forward within a report presented to senior management of EitC. Following this, senior management were invited to an action meeting to discuss the findings further and agree on a realistic change strategy to address issues within the workplace highlighted within the focus group to improve working practice and ultimately the effectiveness of the health promotion interventions for children. A summary of discussion is provided below.

Senior management were thankful for the research work undertaken within the reconnaissance phase; however they were agitated and animated with regards to the elements of poor practice evidenced within the coach's practice. This was likely the first time anyone had questioned and provided evidence of poor practice regarding their coaches. Discussion revolved a need to improve coaching practice on both an operational/delivery and business perspective. This supported the action research process. The findings support the action research process (outlined by Carr and Kemmis, 1986), as my role was to facilitator and discuss new ideas, understand the rationale behind practice and decision making and to support and engage in the process of self-reflection with the senior management of EitC.

Senior management highlighted a desire to tackle 'every issue', but reasoned that they/EitC had grown (i.e., through access to human and financial resources) quickly in the past 12 months and that it would not be feasible in the current climate for such sweeping reform. This increased in activity is highlighted by authors who have highlighted commercialisation and government funding impact on sport and football (Zimmerman, 1997; Robinson, 1999; Watson, 2000) However, quality assurance appeared to offer an approach to tackle elements of coaching

practice that would be regarded as poor, whilst offering a platform to develop or 'skill-up' the coaches to deliver more effectively on interventions. Whilst few studies have explored the impact of coaching practice in FitC, however a number of authors have highlighted skill-gaps and lack of CPD (McGuire and Fenoglio, 2004; McGuire, 2008).

The discussion then focused on the how to take quality assurance forward. It was highlighted that the 25 new Liverpool School Sport Partnership (LSSP) coaches would be the primary focus of quality assurance. Within the meeting there were concerns over the focus of this change from the research team, as it essentially shifted the focus change to coaches that were not part of the original research. Senior management confirmed that these new LSSP coaches would be under the management of EitC with Partnership Development Manager (PDM), but with regards to quality assurance, it was highlighted that there was a need to have them (i.e., the PDMs) 'on board'. As this meeting draw to a close senior management confirmed quality assurance as their change strategy, and set actions to begin meetings between Peter Conn (senior manager and key change person) and I on commencement of the implementation and monitoring phase.

It appears pertinent to discuss in more details some of the fundamental issues that developed during this Study 2. Firstly, the efficacy of the action research process undertaken thus far within the research. This research was a collaborative action research project. As we entered the partnership agreement in 2006 we (i.e., the main stakeholders - EitC senior management, the research team at LJMU including myself) intended to evaluate the football based health improvement intervention and 'showcase' it's impact for the benefit of all involved. In line with the action research process (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004) the collaboration would consider the findings to find ways forward to improve practice and we would complete another evaluation of n new (more improved) football based intervention (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). However, evidence of ineffective and poor coaching practice emerged. On reflection, I felt we should have ensured that senior EitC community coaches were involved planning of the

action (Elliot, 1991). Collaboration by its nature should involve key stakeholders. At this point, EitC community coaches' involvement would have supported the development of practical knowledge (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) to increase positive aspects and reduce negative aspects of working aspects (Kemmis, 2001). This would have more closely aligned with emancipatory action research, which would have allowed EitC community coaches to arrive at their own critique of their own working environment. During this process it was clear that some research ethics issues were also beginning to emerge, as a result of the findings and focus groups. The two major ethical concerns that emerged were (i) feedback that EitC community coaches were delivering poor practice and (ii) that I was revealing this to Peter (senior management), who was responsible for managing the coaches ahead of Gary.

Ethnographic research often involves entering a complex and dynamic research setting (Goodwin et al., 2003). However, Peter and Gary were my key change people (or gatekeepers) (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999). Ensuring access and to an extent acceptance within EitC (Tedlock, 2000). Alongside this, these gatekeepers were responsible for communicating the research process to the staff within EitC. Despite this, during the extensive engagement undertaken supporting the development of rapport with staff (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) and whilst senior management were fully aware of the research role, it was clear that they did not expect these findings. To consider the broader context, FitC was experiencing a huge growth in demand to deliver on the health improvement agenda, as such very little FitC-academic partnerships existed (Watson, 2000) and there is little evidence that there has been any FitC programme that has engaged in research of this extent and nature at the time of commencement. As my 'gatekeepers' to their formal private, organisation whereby I had official permission to access and operate within, I was genuinely concerned that such access would be withdrawn drawing closure to the research to limit any perceived of potential damage of the research. As in Geer (1970, 83) I questioned the whether I should been more forward thinking and prepared collaborators at EitC for the worse.

With regards, to sharing information concerning the EitC community coaching staff, a couple of pieces of research came to mind. My anxiety and uneasiness of sharing sensitive information on the EitC community coaches, left me considering a study by Wolf (1991, 220-221) who in his study of 'outlaw bikers described threats of retaliation on publication of his work. However, a more likely (yet uncomfortable scenario) would be a study on 'fiddling and pilferage' among bread salesmen (Ditton, 1977). Ditton opens the preface to his book in the following way:

I am lucky enough to have a number of friends and colleagues. Probably not as many of the former...now that this book has been published. I don't expect that many of the men at Wellbread's will look too kindly on the cut in real wages that this work may mean to them, and my bakery self would agree with them

(Ditton, 1977, vii)

Whilst, at the time I was not in a position to publish, through sharing this information with their management, I did not want to jeopardise the employment of coaches (people) I had spent an extensive 12 months working with. As an ethnographer I became a member of EitC, an outsider with insider privileges, I cared for the coaches and believed that they at least had the right for me to protect them (Christians, 2000; Hugman, 2010), regardless of whether the research continues or not.

Within the following Study 3 that made up the implementation and monitoring phase and as the key change person (Peter Conn) attempted to elicit change, he was faced with political, situational, contextual and personal barriers to implement the change. The following offers a discussion surrounding some of key issues emerging from Study 3.

There was a clear lack of understanding, clarity and acceptance of my role in the research. This offered a number of initial barriers to the change strategy. As the first meeting (s) within the implementation and monitoring phase unfolded it was clear that Peter did not fully understand the purpose of action research and the respective roles of the author-cum-researcher, senior

management and the coaches. Throughout the duration of the research, I had made several explicit and direct attempts to highlight my role in the research. It is important to consider my role as a researcher-cum-practitioner.

An ethnographic outsider is a researcher not originally a member of the culture, whereas an ethnographic insider has been a member of the culture under study (see Ely 1991; Wheaton, 2000; Lofland, 2000; Berg, 2001). Within this thesis, I have considered myself an ethnographic outsider (i.e., researcher), but someone *with* the privileges, relationships, acceptance, experience, opportunities and degree of knowledge, of an ethnographic insider. Such an approach has ensured access to EitC and people within the organisation. The research involved prolonged extensive engagement alongside the continual development of rapport with EitC community coaches and senior management (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). During this time, the purpose of the researcher was continually shared and affirmed. Despite this, it would not be uncommon for participants forget about the role my role as researcher (especially as I encouraged those around to act naturally through my actions see Krane and Baird, 2005), as they come to know me as a person (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Ferdinand et al., 2007). It is quite likely that coaches and senior management may have dropped their guard about what they may or may not have wanted me/the researcher to know or observe. Such a closeness and immersion could explain how it would be difficult for Peter to focus and bring clarity to the research roles. Especially given the potential stress the implementation of the change strategy was creating.

It became apparent that senior management didn't have the power or ability to through the initial change strategy adopted by senior management within the action meeting (i.e., quality assurance (QA) model for external Liverpool School Sport Partnership (LSSP) coaches). These coaches were not under the management of EitC and by extension the senior management team. Peter struggled to reflect, refine and/or develop the change strategy. Peter's actions appeared

politically motivated (Macintosh and Whitson, 1990) and by attempting to deflect and externalise the change (Laughlin, 1991; Gray et al., 1995) suggested a lack of authenticity. Moreover, Peter displayed behaviours and actions that suggested he could not manage his own day-to-day (Evans, 1994) let alone lead manage change across EitC. Furthermore, there was an lack of trust between senior management (notably) Peter and the EitC community coaches (Cover and Merrill, 2006), however my relationship with the coaches survived Study 2. A potential contributing factor to the environment of EitC and actions of Peter may be a product of the impact of both commercialisation and increase in government funding due to the positioning of football by government to deliver on the health agenda. EitC had grown extensively for a period of years ahead of Peter's arrival and was now working across a number of social agendas (notably health). As Peter continued to fail in his attempts to manage change; during senior manager changes (i.e., departures, arrivals and further departures and the associated unrest), clear signs of a culture devoid of trust (Covey and Merrill, 2006) and the ongoing ethical issues (from Study 2 and 3), I questioned his role as the key change person (or gatekeeper) and his ability to see through meaningful change.

Action research requires reflection (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004), the development of practical knowledge (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) and the development of new ways forward or changes (espoused by McFee, 1993). Peter was struggling to reflect and provide new ways forward. Moreover, Peter's approach surrounded the removal of issues and people rather than create development change strategies. Importantly, as the research continued with Peter as the key change person, positive change seem increasingly less likely and my role as researcher felt increasing like I was trying to convince Peter implement the change rather than facilitate (Kemmis, 2001). During this time, I had been able to find new potential key change people.

Through extensive engagement between me and the EitC community coaches (Study 1 and Study 3) it was clear who were in a position to generate and facilitate ideas relating to improved practice (Gilbourne, 2001). The coaches were those who were essentially the gatekeepers, as any change would effectively impact their day-to-day existence and they were those ready to critically reflect on practice and work towards improved practice in the workplace (Kemmis, 2001). Specifically, Mike became my key gatekeeper and we were able to develop a discourse and eventual action to improve working practice. Mike displayed the willingness (Chisolm, 1995; Fry 1995), support and trust of his colleagues and power (Bradshaw, 1998) required to see through change. The extensive, immersive and prolonged nature deployed within this ethnographic approach was a key factor in progression within the action research framework and towards positive change in the working environment.

6.6. Practical implications – Overview

Whilst community sport (and football's) potential to contribute positively to a multitude of societal outcomes is widely celebrated, empirical evidence for such benefits is limited. There is a lack of robust evidence to support the direct impact of sport and physical activity, with many authors calling for more rigorous testing (Coalter, 2007a; Collins and Kay, 2003; Spaaij, 2009a, 2009b; Tacon, 2007). Coalter (2008, p48) contends that “sport in any simple sense rarely achieves the variety of desired outcomes attributed to it,” going on to state that, “issues of process and context...are key to understanding its developmental potential.” This thesis offers an insight into the working practice and effectiveness EitC a charity based within a professional sport club and a community sport based organisation, that has received unprecedented amounts of public and private money (along with other FitC programmes) despite a distinct lack of research and evaluation (Tacon, 2007). The findings of this thesis offer findings that provide an in detailed exploration of the working practice at both an operational and strategic level relating to

the effectiveness of a football based community oriented intervention (to promote health in children) and details the complexities of attempting to positively change an organisation to meet the demands placed upon them (i.e., in terms of tackling social issues). Certainly, there are many considerations for future practice which have been discussed, however presented below is the synthesised dominant findings that offer guidance towards good practice:

Commissioning sport and/or football as a vehicle for health improvement with children

The overall findings offer some positive foundations to support the use of sport and football (specifically FitC organisations) as a vehicle to promote health with children. However, a number of considerations must be made. Whilst the majority of community coaches provided a fun and enjoyable coaching experiences, which is essentially in development and health improvement with children (Study 1). Moreover, it was evident that EitC could recruit and keep physically active children active as found in Study 1 (Krustrup et al., 2010). The research suggests football can benefit the children from a social perspective through the development of support and friendships (supported by Green, 2002; Atherley, 2006; Kremer-Sadlik and Kim, 2007), help people access positive mentors such as the coaches (Coalter, Allison and Taylor, 2000, Cameron and MacDougall, 2000; Green, 2002) especially for young people from deprived areas (Putnam, 1993; Coalter, Allison and Taylor, 2000; Collins and Kay, 2003). The findings support the notion that football can offer a vehicle for health improvement and be particularly valuable given its football's widespread appeal (to a broad set of stakeholders i.e., children, teachers, parents) (see Study 1; James and Jenkin, 2013). These findings offer favourable considerations that would suggest or at least offer some encouragement to support commissioning bodies funding to utilise sport and/or football.

However, a major concern is the coach's inability to deliver beyond merely providing a good time. Whilst providing a 'fun and enjoyable time' is important when working towards health

improvement with children more strategic and coherent interventions and practice is required (see Study 1). Commissioners should seek evidence of appropriately skilled and experienced practitioners/coaches and either evidence (through research and evaluation) that those receiving the funding can deliver social change (including the provision of resources to deliver research and evaluation on new projects). If organisations can evidence relevant coach/practitioner skill base, evidence of success in social change and research and evaluation processes are in place, commissioners should look favourably when commissioning football based health improvement interventions. Those without evidence should not be funded, unless a clear strategy is in place to attend to the above recommendations.

Employ appropriate skilled community practitioners

It became apparent that the community coaches working within EitC were only trained in typical Football Association Level 2 or UEFA B qualifications. However, such qualifications do not necessarily prepare community coaches with the skills required to attend to and tackle the social agendas at which they are tasked. As McGuire and Fenoglio (2004) note, those working with FitC programmes required a period of ‘skilling up’ i.e., to deliver on health improvement, behaviour change interventions. Study 1 detailed a lack of understanding and skill base to deliver on a health improvement intervention. This alongside other working practices appeared to create a number of negative outcomes, including ineffective recruitment strategies, organisational socialisation (Kuzmic, 1994) and poor communication between senior management and coaches regarding the purpose of interventions. Therefore, it is recommended that those in community sport and football working in health improvement must make sure the right people with the right skills are employed (i.e. including the coaches’ skill base, qualifications and experience across populations). Moreover, community health organisations using sport must provide newly recruited (and existing) community coaches with relevant and specialised training opportunities

to 'skill up', as part of a commitment to relevant continued professional development (CPD). Such an up-skilling process through (say) coordinated CPD opportunities will enable effective delivery across projects and agendas and not necessarily be reliant on the Football Association's incremental levels of (performance-based) coaching qualifications and/or coaching licences. Furthermore, the use of reflective practice with regards to coach development (Knowles et al., 2001) may support the development of positive change and tackle the presence negative organisational socialisation (Kuzmic, 1994) to enable coaches to learn and understand the impact of their actions (Dugdill, et al., 2009).

Funding, policy and a message to governing bodies

It is important to consider the current and political landscape especially within the use of sport and social change. The days of unprecedented funding has since been replaced by an age of public spending austerity with the likelihood of further cuts in levels of funding and scrutiny on the impact of this investment likely to intensify. It is probable, that critical questions will be asked about what should and shouldn't be funded. Core to this is the necessity to be more circumspect about the claims referred to as "a rhetorical fudge that seems to keep policy-makers, practitioners and some researchers happy", that sport can achieve social change and public health objectives (Coalter, 2007a: 172). This becomes more pertinent as football has begun to receive recognition that it is emerging as a key vehicle within health improvement policy (Pringle, McKenna and Zwolinsky, 2013) and therefore my commissioners will begin to consider its role in social change.

If the current economy weakens, funding for interventions and health improvement programmes delivered by sport for health is clawed back, and competition for limited resources intensifies. In this regard, community sport and football programmes will have little choice but to set inflated targets, as very few have the skill base to deliver or evaluate the impact of their work (Weiss,

1993). Coalter (2007a) also argued that even when desired outcomes and aims are set out by interventions they are often very vague and/or far too ambitious to be fulfilled. Moreover, despite the strong political commitment to the social inclusion agenda, there remains no definitive and rigorous analysis of the rationale underpinning sport-based interventions.

This research has shown the importance an independent partnership can have on the development of an organisation. It is recommended that those 'key agents' in positions of authority, influence and/or have commissioning responsibilities (including those within the English Premier League) take the lead on this issue. In this regard, these key agents should avoid compromising the integrity of community sport and football programmes and provide funding for delivery of realistic programme goals. If organisations can evidence practitioner skill base, evidence of success in health improvement and research and evaluation processes are in place commissioners should look favourably when consider using sport or football as a vehicle to deliver health improvement interventions, then these key agents must act and ensure that future delivery budgets for community sport and football programmes have research and evaluation included either centrally or through capacity building to develop local University and sport delivery organisation partnerships. Those without evidence should not be funded, unless a clear strategy is in place to attend to the above recommendations.

Research and evaluation within community sport and football organisations

A change is needed in the philosophy of the community coach, practitioner and senior manager and culture of the organisation to aspire to doing things better, understanding what works and evidencing their impact. This collaborative action research evidences that this is not something that can happen overnight, but something that requires sustained long-term commitment alongside rapport and trust that creates 'real' change in practice (i.e., it affects the 'people' and their day to day practice). The engagement provided through a collaborative i.e., industry and

academic department action research oriented methodologies recently championed by Cruickshank and Collins (2012), alongside the utilisation of relevant quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. It is clear that collaborations of this nature, especially in cultures prone to ‘regular’ changes in senior management require continued and extensive engagement. In this sense the adoption of collaborative action research oriented methodology played a critical role in the ‘success’ of the facilitation of *change* and should be considered as a tool to help create sustainable positive change in working practice. It is important not to underestimate the role of independent academic/theoretical voice that is not contaminated by, or a hostage to, the existing culture and practice. The independent body is in a position to challenge the status quo, where appropriate and where required. Finally, it is clear from this research that the researcher-practitioner role offered a number of valuable benefits. In that, it offered a new skill set (i.e., an understanding of evidence based practice and research and evaluation), broaden the role of the community coach, thus improving their value and worth. Such an approach would directly impact the strategic nature and effectiveness of football (and sport) based health improvement interventions for children and would likely offer a sound financial (and social) return on investment for the NHS (or Public Health England).

Summary of these recommendations

The above recommendations aim to provide guidance for the design, delivery, commissioning of more strategic and operational coherent health improvement interventions for children through community sport and football programmes. The recommendations also provide guidance to researchers and senior management with regards to the adoption of effective research and evaluation through collaboration and/or partnership with independent and/or academic organisations. The overall recommendation from the thesis seeks to encourage policy makers, commissioners and key agents working within sport for social change, especially health to raise

standards of organisations wanting to deliver in this area. The recommendations hope to place these key agents, managers and practitioners in a better position to commission and deliver programmes that offer effective health improvement interventions for children through community sport and football programmes.

6.7. Reflections on philosophical positioning and application of mixed methods

As I (the researcher) began this thesis I had a particular set of biases and preferred methodologies for conducting research. The approach within this thesis required a mixed method approach to achieve its aims. In this regard, I (the researcher) have had to adapt the research design and my philosophical position within studies and across the thesis. The following section seeks to offer the reader an outline of my predominant thoughts following the adoption of such an approach:

The research design incorporated a number of qualitative research methodologies, notably ethnography, participant observation, informal data collection techniques (i.e., conversations), and reflective practice. This allowed for the reporting of pertinent moments from my experiences within the ‘the field’ and enabled me to share these with the research, how I saw it and how it impacted the research and practice. However, I am going to begin with Study 1, as I entered into my first piece of postgraduate research.

I will begin this section with outlining a little about my background in research, so you can begin to understand my philosophical positioning and decision making processes throughout the research. As an undergraduate researcher I was concerned with children physical activity, fitness, anthropology and fatness in pre-pubertal boys. In a group project, I was involved we used accelerometers, DEXA (Dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry) scans, VO₂Max testing, anthropometric testing, ultrasound, validated questionnaires and physical activity diaries. During this project, almost everything was validated or quality assured, even the tape measure we used.

When I entered the development of thesis and Study 1, I was very much concerned with notions of subjectivity, validity and generalisability and *hard* science.

Study 1 was a mixed method and mixed paradigm (i.e., post positivist, interpretivist and constructivist). You can imagine my frustrations at having to accept pedometers over accelerometers. The methods such as pedometers, height, and weight aligned to (or aspired to) the positivist paradigm. Here I was concerned gaining credibility through implementing correct procedures, objectivity, validity, reliability to create independent facts. This was my comfort zone in terms of my past experience.

Study 1 also included semi-structured interviews with the EitC community coaches. This approach aligns with the interpretivist paradigm, allowing opportunities to make sense and seek understanding and clarification of others' perspectives (Taylor, 2008). Essentially, I was able to access and develop an understanding of the meanings, reasons, and insight into human action, which in this case was the community coach's actions (Bryman, 2001). Here, as opposed to collated 'statistics', as in the positivist approaches I was seeking to capture the 'real' world of the first person. I had to evolve the credibility criteria from objectivity, to (aspiring) to offer a value free. In this regard, the interviews concerned openness and dialogue, therefore I had to describe the training undertaken preparing to undertake interviews, the process of structuring the interviews and my past experiences of working in community football to allude to both my practical skills and my ability to build a rapport and in turn trust with the participants (Sparkes, 2002). Alongside this, transcriptions were then analysed using content analysis procedures, in an attempt to a line with notions trustworthiness and authenticity. To support this, I represented the data in the words of the participants (verbatim) to further embrace this value-free aspiration.

During this period, I was still concerned with searching for objectivity, as seen in my attempt to quantify the children's write and draw themes. I recall sitting in room full of the children's write and draw sheets spread across the floor, as I began to 'analyse the content' and group the

findings into themes, I was comfortable with this process. However, on reflection I can see I was attempting to a line to a more post-positivistic approach.

Finally, within Study 1 I immersed myself into the day-to-day working environment at EitC, utilising an ethnographic approach, including participant observation, informal data collection techniques (i.e., conversations), field notes and reflective practice. Whilst I adopt ethnography in Study 1 and 3, there are clear differences in my philosophical positioning and how the findings are constructed. Whilst I sought to fully capture the voice and reality of the participants' existence the data, through presenting the data as a series of themed narrative accounts which draw on the participants' own words, experiences and realities (Polkinghorne, 1988), it is clear that my writing style is 'traditional' and aligned to notions of trustworthiness.

Study 2 (action planning) was consistent with the procedural tenets of action research and in that it sought collective understanding through shared understanding and encouraged the practitioners to consider solutions to practical problems within the workplace. In this regard, the study is positioned within a criticalist paradigm, as the methodology concerned empowerment and encourage change. The first part of Study 2 encouraged shared reflection to develop potential mechanism via a focus group for senior management from EitC. Prior to the focus group the researcher prepared dominant themes that emerged from Study 1 following peer triangulation, consistent with notions of trustworthiness and authenticity (i.e., to support the development of the focus group schedule). This approach was consistent with the processes of constructivist inquiry. I found myself having to align to different credibility markers. In the overall picture of the thesis, I was becoming familiar with these markers, but still left questioning on whether this was 'good' research; a debate I was continually confronting when amongst my peers in the post graduate researcher office (who were all predominantly hard scientists). Action research is by nature, a group process that requires interaction between the researcher (me) and

researched (Tinning, 1992). Group discussion (via the focus group) was particularly useful when the interviewer wishes to encourage research participants to explore and reflect on the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities. On reflection, the focus group was more of a dissemination meeting for most of its duration. The presented verbatim extracts detail an abundance of my 'voice' detailing the findings from Study 1, whilst senior management absorbed and considered their responses. I recall feeling rather out of depth and concerned that they wouldn't break their relative silence. When they did open and begin to express their dissatisfaction, or in the words when 'the alarm bells began to ring', I felt a great deal of relief. We could now finally start developing ideas to move forward and enhance working practice.

The data collected within Study 2, Part I was analysed the context of the discussion and included peer triangulation and represented using the participants' own words, experiences and realities, which helped represent to the reader the voice and actual language of senior management and the personal reflections from myself to help illustrate reactions, motivations and feelings (Lederman, 1990; Kitzinger, 1994). Representing this narrative was very different from Study 1 in that the content was inextricably linked and was *created* as research proceeds. By offering verbatim extracts I again aspired to develop credibility through authentic and trustworthy results.

Study 2, Part II, sought for senior management target explicit change strategies within an action meeting to confirm plausible ways forward consistent with action research methodology. This was co-constructed research, a joint product of the participants, me, and our relationship (Polkinghorne, 2007) I intended the action meeting to encourage senior management to explore and clarify their views. Action towards change was now local and specific (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000) and importantly 'owned' by the senior management. The action meeting approach allowed senior management to share their understanding and experiences to a specific

change strategy. This process provided the participants with an opportunity and insight into demystifying and critiquing their own working practice, environment and organisation consistent with the critical paradigm. Entering this meeting, I felt some apprehension, as it was the first meeting since senior management had spent time digesting and formulating a response to the findings shared and discussed within the focus group (Study 2, Part I). I felt at this point that I was becoming a qualitative researcher and I was certainly anxious on the realities that my results relied on my ability to engage and facilitate discussion more than ever. In this regard, throughout this meeting I was conscious that what I did non-verbally and said verbally could hamper the credibility of the research. I was conscious that I had some ideas of exactly what I thought EitC needed to do, to enhance working practice, however I was conscious not to impose my thoughts on the meeting. Whilst I made conscious efforts in planning prior to the meeting and during the meeting to hold back, during the meeting it was evident that senior management also looked to me (and Dave the rapporteur) for our perspectives, which in turn we provided. In order to detail this interaction and influence verbatim extracts are used to align with trustworthiness and authentic (although not value free). The findings offer the reader the key moments from within the action meeting and in turn the opportunity to make their own conclusion on dialogue. Whilst I enter the findings to move the narrative along for the reader in this section, I also offer my own reflective stops offs to allude to my personal feelings and reflections at the time for the reader.

Study 3 (implementing and monitoring phase) aimed to explore the process of change following the action meeting. Within the tenets of action research my role was to facilitate the change chosen by the participants (senior management). We were very much in the criticalist paradigm, as we were seeking and wanted change (in practice). I chose ethnography as the approach to data collection in Study 3. I could have opted for a different approach, such as quarterly meetings with

senior management, however ethnography allowed me to understand the realities and nature of practice that other techniques do not afford, including a detailed insight into the complexities, realities, culture and power struggles associated with working with a FitC programme.

I really wanted to get under (and into) the realities of life within EitC, with senior management and coaches to improve practice. I guess at this point, I moved some way from my original *hard* science stance. Personally, as a qualitative research it felt right. It felt like a more genuine approach. In that I wanted to know what ‘really’ went on in the process of change, as opposed to a senior manager (potentially diluted) feedback meeting.

Within the ethnographic approach I adopted (as previously within Study 1) participant observation, informal data collection techniques (i.e., conversations), field notes and reflective practice. However, I also had to deal with situations where field notes were just not possible. There were times (many) when I had to resort to mental notes, where I would have to remember and recall, or scribble key words on scrap pieces of paper on within the notes pages of my smart phone. Having to arrive home, empty my pockets and make sense of the key notes to inform my reflective field notes, couldn’t have been further away from accelerometers and epochs!

I chose to present a chronological narrative which detailed a series of collaborative case study cycles that attempt to highlight the distinct action research cycles (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Verbatim citations provide detailed insight into the working practices of the participants (including barriers and self reflections) during the process of change.

As seen throughout the data analysis and representation section in Study 1, I have continually sought to ensure the participants own voice, word verbatim, language, tone, contextual features; and professional, organisational, personal and environmental features were utilised. To fully capture the voice and reality of the participants’ existence the data is presented as a series of themed narrative accounts which draw on the participants’ own words and experiences. However, I present this data (Study 3) very differently. Study 1 (as outlined) used a more

traditional approach writing, however within Study 3 the writing is independently co-constructed with realism verbatim. Offering richer, contextual laiden narratives with my personal reflections and input to move the story along for the reader I have attempted to aligned to both criticalist and postmodern paradigm credibility measures. Here I aspired to provide the reader with (non-value free) narrative within a methodology and representation style that displays trustworthiness and authenticity, legitimacy and believability. Furthermore, I wanted to detail to the reader that I ‘really’ was an insider and was providing a genuine. An element was the notion of ‘awakening’. In this regard, I became ‘awakened’ to the Peters (senior management) character on Friday 28 March 2008. Here I felt I had a real understanding of who he was, his decision making processes, his reactions and intentions (Polkinghorne, 2007; Witz, 2007). Despite this I sense Peter was never awakened to my role in the research or perhaps even his.

6.8. Strengths and limitations of the research

The research undertaken within the thesis has a number of strengths and limitations. One of the most notable strengths of the research is the methodologies undertaken. The mixed methods, longitudinal and multiple paradigmatic approaches have offered an abundance of rich, quality, contextual data. The collection of such data, especially where access (and acceptance) is required (i.e., with children, schools, community coaches) relies heavily on the quality of interpersonal relationships between the researcher and the participants (Lee, 1993). The flexibility to adopt various research methods and the longitudinal nature of action research protocol (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004) offers valuable opportunities to develop such relationships between myself and the participants. The reconnaissance phase (i.e., Study 1) allowed me to develop a closeness, trust (even friendship) and familiarisation with senior management coaches and children in their respective environments and decreased the likelihood of adjusting their

behaviours due to the researcher's presence (Ennew, 1994; Gilbourne and Richardson, 1996; Bryman, 2001; Ensign, 2003; Liamputtong, 2007).

Despite this I was acting as a 'Trojan Horse', whereby I was creating trust through a personal relationship that serves as a means to efficiently obtain a disclosure from someone else's world. Jette Fog (2004) described this "Trojan horse" as being able "to get behind defence walls of the interview subjects, laying their private lives open and disclosing information to a stranger, which they may later regret. Close emotional relationships between interviewer and interviewee can open for more dangerous manipulation than the rather distanced relationships of an experimenter and experimental subjects." (Kvale, 2006, p482). In this regard and throughout the thesis I had to acknowledge and respect the participants who had granted me access to their worlds.

Part of the approach to gaining acceptance and credibility included actual presence at coaching sessions and within the office and in some case I applied craft knowledge delivering coaching enabled the researcher to 'get close' and support becoming an 'insider'. Entering Study 2 and 3 with this established trust and rapport is reflected in the quality and richness of data collected within Study 3, which relied heavily on interpersonal relationships developed earlier in the research. Becoming an insider and gaining (what I believe to be) respect did appear that further encourage those I had become close to, to open up, relax and share more information (Hamersley and Atkinson, 1995). I have made extensive efforts to protect the identity of those involved in the research, within publications, dissemination events and here – within the thesis.

The collaboration action research process offers the flexibility to utilise a range of data collection approaches and techniques that all seek to work in a collaborative manner with research participants to engage in action and reflective action cycles. The first issue I had with this approach relates to the misunderstanding and in some cases lack of ownership within the research process by the participant (notably senior management). The research adopted a

collaborative approach from conception; however my immersion or involvement of the within the organisation and the extent of involvement with the participants in some cases appeared to create tensions. In that, senior management expected me to deliver (despite ongoing attempts to reinforce roles and responsibilities) on the change strategy. In this regard, during Study 2 and Study 3 notably senior management, expressed divergence in the interpretations of mine and their roles, this created a lack of 'ownership' of the action and research on behalf of participants. Despite, explaining (many) times the tenets of action research and our respective roles and responsibilities Peter (senior management) still could accept it was not my responsibility to deliver. From his perspective, I was 'in' and should be 'doing' rather than facilitating. I recall on one occasion Peter asking me to forget 'the whole research thing' and just make the change strategy happen. I took a number of measures to ensure this did not occur. This included regularly checking with participants regarding emerging interpretations of the research roles. However, this limitation may be due to senior management (specifically Peter Conn's) (apparent) lack of skill-base, willingness or where-with-all to see through the change strategy, which resulted in divergent strategies to avoid completing the change.

Another limitation of the study was the absence of 'full cycles' (i.e., the change strategy in its original incarnation was not completed) where outcomes from the action phase are assessed and further action is subsequently undertaken. This made it difficult to draw meaning from the complex ongoing interactional data collected and presented within Study 3. I was ultimately required to compromise overall timeframes for the completion of Study 3 and the thesis, as I waited in anticipation for change to happen.

Throughout the thesis I sought counsel with a 'critical friend' who challenged my emerging conclusions for bias (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003). Herr and Anderson (2005) also noted that, "... a study's trustworthiness involves the demonstration that the researcher's interpretations of the data are credible, or "ring true" to those who provided the data" (p. 50).

The paradigmatic journey that I have taken from Study 1 to Study 3 has been detailed earlier, however whilst I may have been seeking some generalisability in Study 1 (i.e., with the more post-positivist measures) for Study 2 and Study 3 I have attempted to remain consistent with credibility markers across various paradigms (non and) value free, aspiring for notions of trustworthiness, authenticity, legitimacy and believability.

6.9 Recommendations for future research

The findings of this thesis offers an understanding of the effectiveness of a FitC programme (EitC) in promoting health in its local community. In order to support future sport and football based health interventions delivered within FitC and inform broader sport based health improvement policy. This collaborative action research project also offers an in-depth insight into the working practice of a FitC programme and the collaborative action research (or ways forward) to enhance the organisations effectiveness delivering health improvement services through football.

The results evidenced that the football oriented school based coaching intervention delivered by a FitC programme, a provided excitement, enjoyment and fun for (the majority of) those children involved (and the school teachers). The intervention provided an opportunity for the majority of already active children to engage in further physical activity opportunities. Whilst this positive experience is highly laudable, it appeared that due to the deficiencies (or gaps) in the coaches' skill base, and subsequent inappropriate working practices, the potential effectiveness of this intervention was limited to 'keeping active children active, through fun and enjoyable sessions'. Poor coaching practice (although isolated and coach dependent) was evidenced, which appeared to be a results of poor recruitment strategies and absence of relevant and specialised training opportunities or continued professional development (CPD). Whilst findings allude to a number of potentially positive factors that may provide a background for such interventions to

deliver positive results in community based football projects, it is apparent that EitC may require a number of positive organisational changes to improve their effectiveness.

Prior to this research very little research had been undertaken to explore the health improvement interventions and working practice of a FitC programme. The findings offer some valuable considerations for policy makers, commissioners, managers and practitioners working within sport and health improvement. Further research is needed to build upon this research exploring the impact football oriented community coaching intervention in health improvement for children. This future research should seek to work across a range of FitC programmes at both Premier League and Football League Football Clubs and incorporate physiological, psychological and sociological measures to fully understand the impact of such sport based intervention work. With this in mind, it is apparent that football (and sport) does not possess a curricular for the delivery or an accredited route for training and development of coaches in football and health improvement.

This research suggests that there is a need for the development of an evidenced based football oriented community coaching health improvement intervention (design and) curricular and aligned effective bespoke coaching qualifications for coaches and practitioners. With regards to the coaching qualification, this needs to be fit for purpose for the role of in respect of the FitC coach. In that, they are more than just a football coach and require a broadened skill set to meet the demands of the complex interventions they are being tasked.

The research also suggests that senior management appeared to lack the skill base required to adjust and attend to the complex social agendas that community sport are being challenged to address. Peter and Gary (senior management) did not appear to have any additional training or education to prepare them for their work. This suggests that senior management across FitC may require bespoke CPD. With this it, appears pertinent to consider a more strategic and broader approach to collaborative action research working directly with sports governing bodies

(for example, the Premier League or Football League Trust) to develop capacity building for senior management across community sport organisations.

6.10 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to understand the effectiveness of a FitC programme (EitC) in promoting health in its local community. In order to support future sport and football based health improvement interventions delivered with FitC and inform the broader sport based health improvement policy.

This research explored school-based community-based football-oriented coaching intervention delivered by EitC a Premier League Football Clubs community arm and registered charity within deprived areas of Liverpool. The research offered a comprehensive insight into the effectiveness of the intervention from the perceptions of children via the deployment and collation of a multitude of methods to create detailed, rich and quality contextual information regarding the effectiveness of the intervention. Furthermore, the research was able to capture broader factors that have influenced the effectiveness of the intervention from the perspective of the coach and from the organisation. The research has illustrated that the intervention delivered by a FitC programme provided a fun and enjoyable experience for children. However, the research suggests that due to the deficiencies (or gaps) in the coaches' skill base, and subsequently inappropriate working practices, the potential effectiveness of this intervention has been limited to 'keeping active children active, through fun and enjoyable sessions'. The research did raise a number of strategic and operational issues related to the intervention including intervention selection criteria, coaching practice, recruitment, induction processes and continued professional development. Such considerations were evident in one of the reputed leaders in community football (and sport) therefore it is imperative that those involved in such health improvement

consider these findings to maximise the potential success future interventions can have in promoting health in children.

This research, the first of its kind within a FitC, sought to work in collaboration with those being researched through action research. This enabled the author to co-construct, share and discuss the findings from the research with those based within the researched organisation, with a view to developing ways forward (or actions) to tackle these workplace problems that emerged. The research provided insight into the complexity and challenges that are present within community football programmes. Offering a unique insight into the decision making processes associated with senior management in their attempt to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation. In this regard, action research and prolonged ethnographic engagement appear to offer an effective approach to conducting research that can promote positive changes in working practice. Furthermore, this action research approach, including a range of qualitative research methodologies allowed for the research to observe and explore the complexities of the day-to-day existence of senior management and community coaches operating within community football programmes. It is imperative that this, that the reality of existence and practice is understood and considered by policy makers, commissioners and researchers consider prior to decision making.

In this thesis I have explored the multifaceted and complexity concerned within health improvement in children through a community football oriented intervention. Furthermore, the research offers quality and rich contextual data concerning the pursuit of positive changes in working practice within EitC, as part of the action research project. The results of this work has enabled recommendations for policy and practice to develop. Moreover, there are key messages for managers and practitioners working with football and sport in health improvement. These findings do not claim to be generalisable, as the research is both unique methodologically and through its focus. However, the results make an important contribution to the understanding of those using football, sport for health improvement and/or for those working in health

improvement using sport as a vehicle for delivery. The research suggests that EitC offers a vehicle for health improvement. Despite this, the research details findings that strongly suggest positive changes in working practices are required in EitC relating to coach recruitment and CPD.

Whilst change may not be a succinct straight forward, action research offers a method to guiding and developing positive changes in working practice. These findings do not claim to be generalisable, however they may resonate with other FitC programmes seeking to adapt to the changing face of commissioning and funding for health improvement initiatives. If such changes can be implemented across football and FitC, we may be able offer more effective health improvement interventions and seek to establish further evidence on the role football can play in health improvement. As EitC is recognised regionally, nationally and globally through its success in awards for community engagement and through the football clubs brand, it is hoped that this research will act as a catalyst to improve the effectiveness of sport and football based health improvement interventions worldwide

CHAPTER 7

7.0. Reflection upon the action research process

Creating meaningful change through Action Research

Action research is associated with addressing practical problems in the workplace (Gilbourne 1999, 2001; Pasmore, 2001; Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004). This is often seen as a group process which always involved collaboration between the researcher and researched (Tinning, 1992). In this regard, participants in social situations engage in self-reflection in order to improve and/or rationalise their own practice. Few would argue that this is not the purpose of action research or the process that takes place.

In addition, action research has been described as participatory and democratic in nature (Reason and Bradbury, 2001), that concerns continuous cyclical process, including reconnaissance, planning, observation and reflection (Elliot, 1991), a process that seeks to encourage practitioners to reflect upon new working strategies (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004). With the intention of stimulate thinking towards an action or change strategy, which is reflective in nature (McFee, 1993). Gilbourne (2001) highlighted that reflection upon current practice can act to encourage debate among practitioners and facilitates ideas relating to practice, which can be shared and as the process of action research open's and the reflective cycles begin, positive changes in working practice become more likely.

In the following vignette I intend to offer some insight into my experiences working in action research, as an ethnographer, in what Greenwood and Levin (2000, p94) would describe as the biggest *test* for social research (i.e., social change).

Becoming an Action Researcher

I would prefer not to offer up this final insight, however I feel I need to make some further observations clear for the reader and other researchers considering this type of approach to research (i.e., action research). Whilst I genuinely make a serious attempt not to self-indulge, I hope this provides some considerations for others embarking on action research in the future.

When I joined LJMU and was fortunate to be offered the initial Part Time Research Assistant position with Everton in the Community. At the time, I was a tattoo away from being classed a hard core Everton fan. Having attended my first game at the age of 2 years, had a season ticket and 'gone the game' week in week out with my Dad and friends, I lived and breathed football (and Everton).

I was also a keen coach working mainly on football projects in youth development. However, early on in my coaching career I took a conscious decision to become a community coach and began to work on social inclusion, disability, women and girls projects through my position at the Cheshire County Football Association. Then I was a fresh faced coach, doing my best to make a difference through football, so I felt like I had won the lottery starting this research – at Everton FC!

My background (research wise) revolves around physical activity and fitness in young children, so when 'action research' and the notion of ethnography emerged, I was in new territory. Having engaged in action research on a part time and full time basis throughout the thesis, I am a great believer in that the process, requires a longitudinal (i.e., it's going to take time) ethnographic (i.e., ideally you need to be considered an 'insider') approach to develop notions of trust and a positive rapport to increase the likeliness of change. To engage in such research (and despite recommendations not to say this), 'you become one of the lads' (well at least in this case). To really be 'in', you need to talk the talk and walk the walk. You need to live their lives, as closely as possible and understand the un-seen factors that affect day-to-day decision making processes. In this case, it meant being able to coach (to show I can walk the walk), playing in football tournaments (to show I wasn't just an academic, I could also play 'a bit' too) and going the match, socialising as friends with the participants.

In this regard, I think I entered into this research (i.e., action research and ethnography) with favourable attributes. Such as having craft knowledge, academic and applied qualifications (i.e., coaching experiences and badges), fortunately I have played at a decent standard of football (and still do), alongside the soft people skills (i.e., to develop conversations, a rapport and ultimately friendships) and character (i.e., to deal with the realities of life and work within teams, such as 'banter', conflict and different personalities) appear beneficial to success in action research and ethnography. At least here they appear to make sense. Developing these and the influence this has on becoming an 'insider', is nothing new, but...

When reading the literature regarding action research the word change is used continually. In the literature, the process of change is logical and clear. Despite this, 'things' get in the way. Being engaged in ethnography and a complex environment (especially the ruthless football culture) creates unintended consequences, which are (a) your role as a facilitator is questioned/ challenged and (b) your actions as a researcher (and person) may (and will) impact the research.

Becoming an 'insider' whilst beneficial for the credibility and trustworthiness of the research, created a situation whereby it became very difficult for EitC staff (senior management and community coaches) to understand why I could not drive the change strategy myself. Despite repeatedly reinforcing my role and the process of action research, on several occasions in Study 2 and Study 3 Gary and Peter expected me to 'step up' and deliver the change. They wanted me to deliver the change strategy that they decided upon. In this regard, I personally thought the change of quality assurance on the internal EitC community coaches was feasible; however Gary and Peter could not make this happen. To make it even clearer, I thought this change was more than do-able and I wanted to 'step up' and make it happen!

As a personable and passionate person, especially where football and helping others is concerned, it is extremely difficult to suppress this 'will' to sort things out and make things happen. I talk about the notions of social accountability and accountability to the communities that the community coaches served. Becoming immersed within the environment and day-to-day life of EitC, I became one of the team, I shared their (Mike and the coaches) sense do better, and their personal responsibility to see things through, to improve their working practice, for the benefit of the local community.

This must be considered, as I believe these personal feelings, developed within the culture and environment of the more genuine community coaches within EitC played a pivotal role in seeing through positive changes in the action research. Here I was able to find the people that 'we' (i.e., action researchers) want and need to find. I had found those committed improvements in practice and social change. But, it wasn't all good (we had the 'bad and ugly too), I met and became close to the coaches that were 'poor'. They didn't care about their professionalism, they didn't care about the community and in most cases their selfish actions revolved their aspiration to use EitC, as a stepping stone to get into the academy and performance side of football. I would have appreciated this as a strategic move by coaches, if they maintain their professionalism throughout.

No-one makes the decisions for you during action research and the subtle decisions made on a day-to-day basis can have huge impacts on the flow and direction of the research. By managing these feeling positively (if change is not happening), I was able to develop my internal relationships, whilst waiting for the 'right' people to emerge (to empower, to support and facilitate them) to deliver on the change strategy or change. As I write this sentence, I recognise that I have used the word 'change' many times. Leaving us with a important question, "Does change need to happen with action research?". On reflection, I believe, that I thought we (i.e., the research team and EitC) needed change to occur. Indeed, things needed to get better for EitC. These feelings were due to two main factors, which are (a) an assumption that change is required for credible and publishable action research and (b) because of a personal belief organisations (i.e., EitC) could

be doing so much more (i.e., they could be more effective). This can result in the action researcher, waiting (and hoping, often frustrated) for change to happen.

I recognise now, that this was not my change. We shouldn't be judged on whether change happens and we should not wait for change to happen (beyond reasonable and informed deadline periods). Change doesn't need to happen in action research for the process not to offer a valuable insight into the complexities and challenges of change, empowerment, conflict and the presence or absence of change. As the change you want and need may never come.

Finally, the experience of completing this thesis has been life changing. I can only offer one more personal message, which is my approach in life, which has been harnessed through this action research journey...spend time with people, but once you have found the genuine, good and honest people, make it your goal to keep them close.

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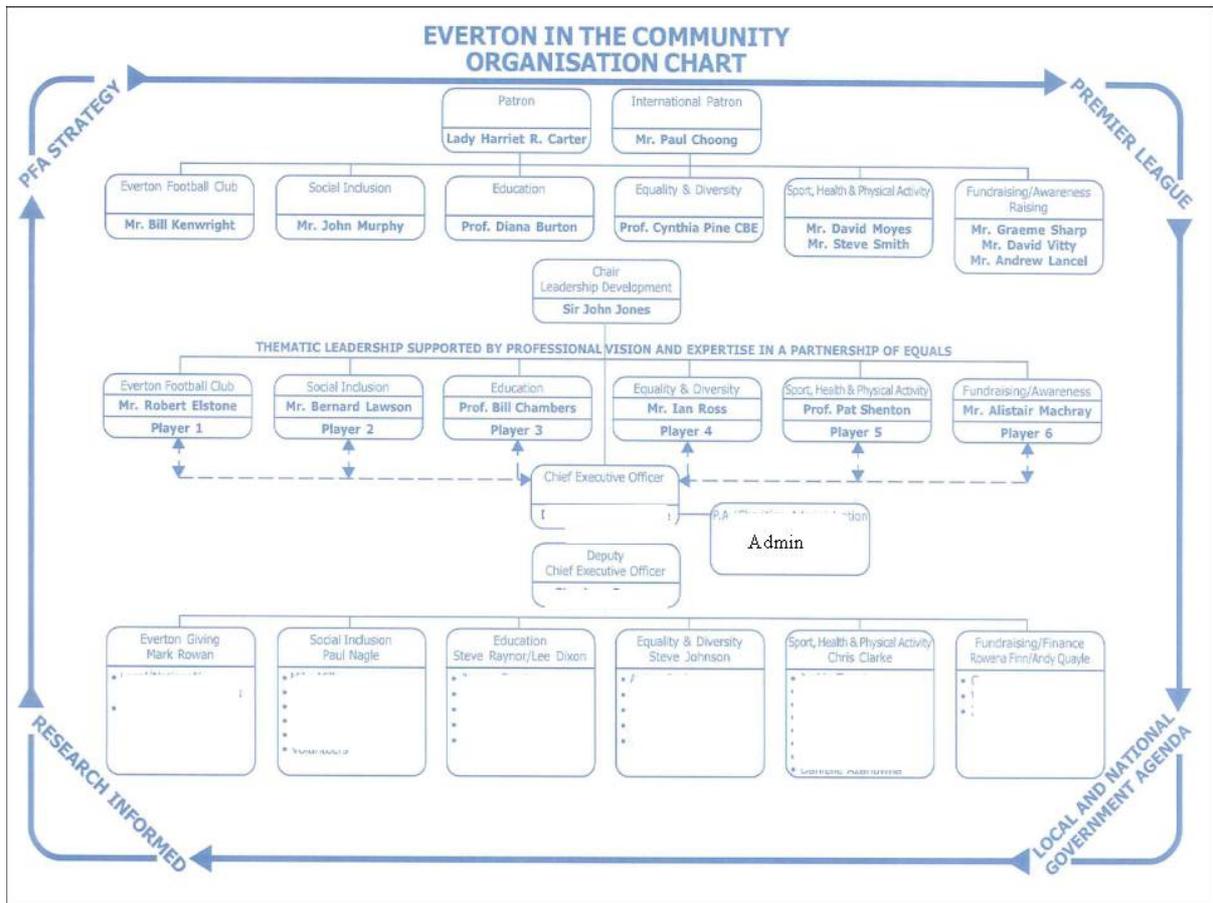
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Appendix A – Everton in the Community Organisational Chart



Appendix B - Parent guardian consent (and information sheet)



PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM To be completed by the Parent/Guardian

I ***agree/do not agree**** for my child to take part in the study that has been clearly explained to my child and me. I understand what my child will have to do for the study and that I can ask questions at any time. I understand that I can halt my child's participation in the study at any time. Any information gathered will not be told to anyone (teachers/friends).

* delete as appropriate

School.....

Childs name.....

Signed (Parent/Guardian).....

Date.....



Daniel Parnell B.Sc.(Hons)
Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences,
Liverpool John Moores University
Henry Cotton Campus
Webster Street
Liverpool
L3 2ET
UK
Tel: 07724 684314
Email: D.S.Parnell@2003.ljmu.ac.uk

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Title of the project: 'Understanding the activity profiles of young children within a football based programme; whilst exploring the effect that Everton in the Community has on the engagement and perceptions towards physical activity profiles of the young children'.

Purpose of the study:

The study seeks to gather information regarding the physical activity patterns of young children. Pedometers will be used to collect information regarding the number of steps your children take per day, which will be recorded in your child's step count diary. The pedometer is a small, light piece of equipment, which is approximately 4x5cm and will be worn on the children's waistband. Your child will also be involved in discussions concerning what influences their behaviours and what perception they have towards physical activity. Additionally, weight, height and waist circumference measurements will be recorded to help understand the children's activity profile in more detail.

Please note:

Your child can withdraw from the study at any time and all the information received will be strictly confidential and will only be used by myself.

No time will be taken away time from your child's education.

Could you please indicate whether or not you would like your child to be involved in the programme on the attached consent form. If you have any concerns or queries don't hesitate in contacting me on the above email or number.

Thank you

Daniel

Appendix C - Head teacher of the consent (and information sheet)



HEADTEACHER INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM To be completed by the Head teacher

I ***agree/do not agree**** for the pupils of my school to take part in the study that has been clearly explained to me. I understand what I (and the pupils) will have to do for the study and that I can ask questions at any time. I understand that I can stop the pupils participation in the study at any time. Any information gathered will not be told to anyone (they will not be told to parents, school friends or teachers).

* delete as appropriate

School.....

Signed (Headteacher).....

Date.....



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UK
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Dear Head teacher,

My name is Daniel Parnell and I am currently studying to complete an MPhil in conjunction with Liverpool John Moores Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Science and Everton Football Club in the Community. The purpose of my study is to explore the physical activity profiles of young children and how Everton Football in the Community coaches can influence behaviour/ lifestyle change.

I have enclosed an information sheet outlining the project that I aim to begin in the new school year in 2006. The project plans to work with Everton Football Club in the Communities planned 16-week programme of school sessions.

I would appreciate if you could return the enclosed consent form stating whether your school is willing to take part in the project. If you have any further questions or queries don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Parnell



INFORMATION SHEET

Whats the study about?...



The study is by Liverpool John Moores University and will be finding out what you think about your health and physical activity. It is also going to look at what you enjoy doing in your spare time, at school and at the weekend. You will get your own physical activity diary and a piece of equipment to wear called a pedometer that counts your steps.

Do you enjoy sport? What are your favourite leisure time activities?

What will I be doing?

I will be watching your activity sessions ran by Everton in the Community coaches. There will be lots of fun activities to find out more about what you think about your health and physical activity level, which will be completed in small groups in your classroom. You may be asked to draw pictures. All activities will be explained in more detail by the researcher and your class teacher and lots of help will be provided.

Please turn over....

Why we need your help....

Once we have collected all your views we can then work together with you and Everton in the Community and your school to make fun and exciting things for you to do to improve your health.



The project will be something that will be part of your school and community it will be packed full of fun and exciting activities and events that make you more aware of being healthy and happy.

IF AT ANY TIME YOU FEEL YOU DO NOT WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY, DON'T WORRY, YOU ARE ALLOWED TO STOP ANY TIME YOU WISH AND WILL NOT GET INTO TROUBLE FOR DOING SO.

The researchers name is Mr Daniel Parnell and is part of a team of people at the School of Sport and Exercise Science Department who are conducting the study at Liverpool John Moores University in conjunction with Everton in the Community.

Appendix E - Child consent



CHILD INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM To be completed by the Child

I ***agree/do not agree**** to take part in the study that has been clearly explained to me. I understand what I will have to do for the study and that I can ask questions at any time. I understand that I can stop taking part in the study at any time. Any information gathered will not be told to anyone (they will not be told to parents, school friends or teachers).

* delete as appropriate

School.....

Signed (Child).....

Date.....

Physical Activity Diary

Name.....

School.....

D.O.B.....

Address.....

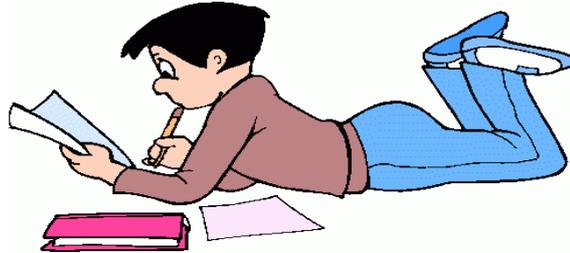
.....



Physical Activity is everything that you do with your body. Walking, running, football, swimming and riding a bike are all different types of physical activity.

In your Physical Activity you can record 3 different types of Physical Activity:

1) **Low Level** - these types of activities don't require much effort and you can do them easily without tiring. Examples: walking to school, tidying your bedroom and doing your homework



2) **Medium Level** – these activities require more effort and you may feel your heart beating faster and your breathing getting heavier. Examples: riding a bike (not really fast!!), fast walking, playing out with friends.



3) **High Level** – these activities require lots of effort, your heart will beat really fast and your breathing will become heavier. Examples: running, playing football/ basketball/netball and swimming.



Filling in your Activity Diary

- Each day when you wake up, write down the time that you have woken.
- The day is then split into sections, in each of the sections fill in what type of activity you did. It could be playing with friends, which may be low level, medium level or high-level activity. Estimate how much of each level activity you did.
- At the end of each day record your pedometer count.

Example:

Day: Thursday

Morning

I got out of bed at 8:15 am

I travelled to school by (circle which one)



My first lesson was history

During my first break I played football with my friends
and did lots of
running. _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	5mins
Medium level physical activity	15mins
Low level physical activity	20mins

Pedometer Count -

----- 10,352 -----

DAY 1 THURSDAY

Morning

I got out of bed at _____

I travelled to school by (circle one)



My first lesson/s was _____

During my first break I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

My second lesson/s was _____

At dinner I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

My last lesson/s where _____

Afternoon

I travelled home from school by (circle one)



When I got home from school before I had my tea I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

I had my tea at (time?) _____

After my tea I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

I went to bed at (time?) _____

Pedometer Count _____

Day 2 FRIDAY

Morning

I got out of bed at _____

I travelled to school by (circle one)



My first lesson/s was _____

During my first break I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

My second lesson/s was _____

At dinner I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

My last lesson/s where _____

Afternoon

I travelled home from school by (circle one)



When I got home from school I before I had my tea I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

I had my tea at (time?) _____

After my tea I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

I went to bed at (time?) _____

Pedometer Count _____

Day 3 SATURDAY

Morning

I got out of bed at _____

In the morning I (what did you do?) _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

Afternoon

In the afternoon I _____

I felt I was doing

High <i>level physical activity</i>	
Medium <i>level physical activity</i>	
Low <i>level physical activity</i>	

I had my tea at (time?) _____

After my tea I _____

I felt I was doing

High <i>level physical activity</i>	
Medium <i>level physical activity</i>	
Low <i>level physical activity</i>	

I went to bed at (time?) _____

Pedometer Count _____

Day 4 SUNDAY

Morning

I got out of bed at _____

In the morning I (what did you do?)

I felt I was doing

High <i>level physical activity</i>	
Medium <i>level physical activity</i>	
Low <i>level physical activity</i>	

Afternoon

In the afternoon I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

I had my tea at (time?) _____

After my tea I _____

I felt I was doing

High level physical activity	
Medium level physical activity	
Low level physical activity	

I went to bed at (time?) _____

Pedometer Count _____

Appendix G - Coach consent



COACH INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM To be completed by the Coach

I ***agree/do not agree**** to take part in the study that has been clearly explained to me. I understand what I will have

to do for the study and that I can ask questions at any time. I understand that I can stop taking part in the study at any time. Any information gathered will not be told to anyone (they will not be told to colleagues or senior management).

* delete as appropriate

School.....

Signed (Coach).....

Date.....

Appendix H - Focus group report



A collaborative study between Everton in the Community (EITC) and the Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Science (RISES), Liverpool John Moores University.

Funded by GREGGS North West.



SUMMARY REPORT –

Action research meeting 16th July 2007 at Henry Cotton.

Purpose of this Report:

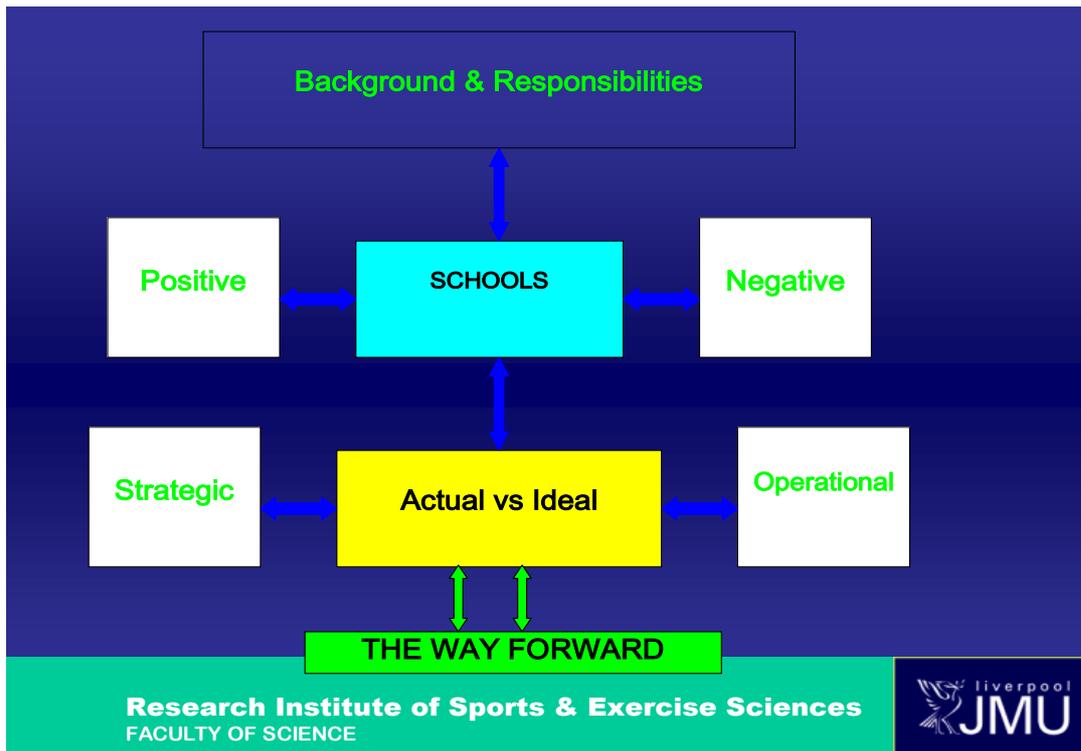
The following report offers a summary of the action research discussion meeting held 16th July 2007. The meeting concerned feedback to EITC, represented by Mr Gary James and Mr Peter Conn, from the researcher's, Daniel Parnell, initial 'reconnaissance' phase of the project. DP was reporting key events, issues and elements of practice encountered by the researcher to the client, with the purpose to help stimulate conversation around encouraging positive changes in the workplace.

This report utilises the actual presentation slides used within the discussion to guide the format of the report. Each slide is followed by a synopsis of the discussion and a series of action strategies, which have been identified as potential ways forward for EITC.

Contents of this Report:

	Page
1.0 The School- (original slide) Summation of discussion	3 - 4
2.0 The Children- (original slide) Summation of discussion	4 - 7
3.0 The Coach- (original slide) Summation of discussion	8 -12
4.0 Concluding remarks	12 - 15
5.0 Appendices	15 -17

1.0 The school – summation of the discussions

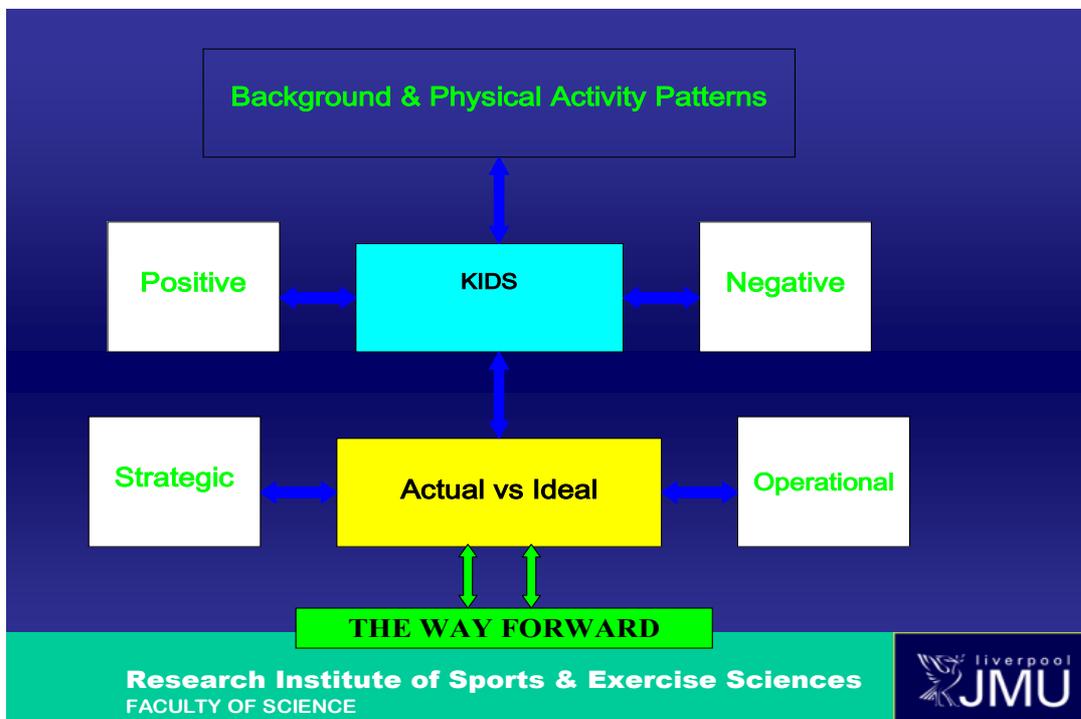


- 1.1 All four schools included in the project were from low socio economic status areas, which are also rated as extremely socially and economically deprived areas by Ofsted, as indicated by the number of children who have free school meals.
- 1.2 To begin with the focus of conversation surrounded the main link teacher in each school. The link teachers had different roles in the school, (these included the PE coordinator and head teacher). It was recognised that these people varied in effectiveness. DP highlighted examples of perceived best practice and poor practise that was experienced in the schools.
- 1.3 Typically, children were not ready for the sessions; some sessions witnessed poor attendance and/or high drop out rates. Late starts subsequently resulted in reduced time 'in session', less time in physical activity and less time to promote/encourage behaviour change in the children. This is not saying that all schools were exhibiting this element of poor practice. However, it appears that there is definitely scope for improvement, with regards to this issue in some schools.
- 1.4 It was highlighted that both the coaches and teacher recognised that there was a problem with children being ready; however no action was taken by either party. The discussions concluded that this was predominantly the schools responsibility. Neither the coaches nor the teachers appeared to take any action or assumed responsibility for such occurrences.

The way forward

1. The discussion highlighted that 'ideally' the coaches would arrive in good time and the children would be ready and prepared.
- 2I. It was suggested that the schools need to be seen as the key facilitator in driving the project through direct involvement of teachers. With this the ownership of the project is passed onto the schools, therefore when problems arise the schools can be consulted and reminded of their roles and responsibilities to the project.
- 2II. Therefore, EITC need to ensure schools are aware of their responsibilities and are encouraged to fully embrace the project (ideally) through the head teacher. This suggests that EITC need to 'sell' what they are offering to the schools more purposely.
- 2III. It appears that it may be beneficial to draw up more formal and clear expectations of the school's responsibilities, and clear guidelines as to the role of the teacher(s), the children and the coach. Therefore, each party has clarity in their responsibilities and roles concerning the project.

2.0 The children – summation of discussion



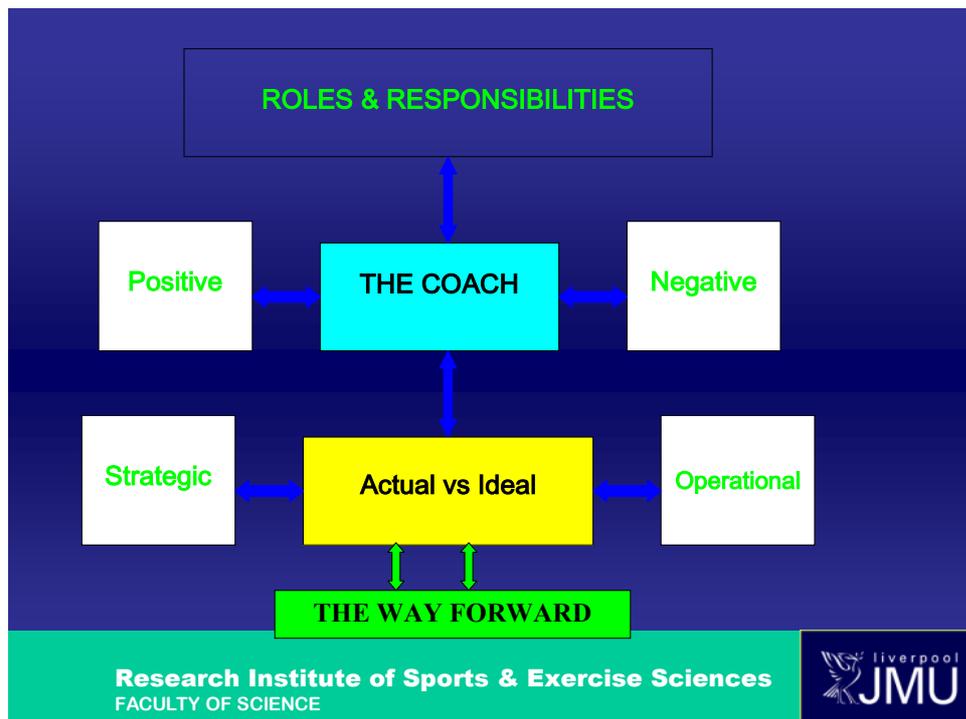
- 2.1 The project specifically engaged 38 boys and 12 girls, with a mean of age of 9.3 years.
- 2.2 It was highlighted that pre-project we had 29 underweight, 8 normal weight and 2 children classed as overweight/obese. The changes in the children were measured and post-project we had 27 underweight, 9 normal weight and 3 children classed as overweight/obese.
- 2.3 Discussions highlighted that the recommended guidelines for children vary from 11000-13000 steps per day (Le Masurier, *et al.* In Press). After studying the data of the children it shows that out of 35 diary reports pre-programme 16 children were meeting the recommended 'steps' guidelines, of which 15 children were exceeding the recommendations. However, 19 children were failing to meet these recommended guidelines. Post-programme, out of 26 diary reports 13 children met the recommended guidelines with 8 children exceeding them. 12 children were failing to meet the recommended guidelines post-programme. It was suggested that the results show a number of children are not being engaged sufficiently enough to increase their step count.
- 2.4 It was highlighted that of the 15 children that failed to meet the recommended guidelines in our pre-programme measurements, 9 were still failing to meet the guidelines post programme. This suggests that the programme was not attending to the strategic aim of EITC (i.e. building a healthier community). However, 4 children had improved and were now meeting the recommended guidelines. The programme appears to be having a measured effect on some children. However, a substantial number of children were not engaged significantly enough to increase their step count and level of physical activity.
- 2.5 Discussions highlighted that the two children who started the programme as obese/overweight, were both failing to meet recommended guidelines in the pre-programme tests. However, post-programme both children were meeting the recommended guidelines.
- 2.6 It was highlighted that potentially the project could aim specifically at the hard to reach children. Concerns were expressed over this strategic selection of children, as EITC would not want to be perceived to 'single out' a specific population of 'fat' children. GJ highlighted that this would mean having to tailor a programme to reduce obesity, however concerns over the difficulty of identification and its perceived 'risk' meant that EITC would have to steer clear from this. In response to this DP highlighted that this may not be the case and that it is feasible for children to be selected without them being identified as a specific target. On top of this, a number of similar projects targeted at attending to the obesity agenda exist in the UK, that operate by using specific selection criteria.
- 2.7 The discussion then focused on concerns raised about the selection criteria used for the children. The following issues were discussed.
 - 2.7.1 Pre-programme: of the children involved almost half were already meeting the recommended guidelines for 'steps' per day and were, in some cases, classed as very active. Additionally, it was noted that the children were very enthusiastic and all stated that they played football in their recess/lunch or leisure time.

- 2.7.2 It was also identified that the teachers appeared to choose the children for the project to help promote positive behaviour in children with behavioural problems and to boost attendance in poor attendees, whilst other children were chosen as a reward for good behaviour and/or to boost attendance.
- 2.7.3 It was highlighted that the results suggested that the programme was keeping already active children, who love football, and play football regularly, active. It would appear that EITC are supplying a physical activity programme for the active children and by doing so you are keeping them active. Which suggests that in a broad sense EITC was meeting their broad strategic aim of 'improving the quality of life of their community'.
- 2.7.4 Discussions addressed the point that without a clear selection criteria, this and subsequently programmes will not be able to addressing a specific strategic aim and/or a specific agenda.
- 2.8 Conversation then moved to a more specific situation, whereby a teacher highlighted that the girls involved in the project, wouldn't really play football with the boys at lunch and recess time, however now as a consequence of the EITC programme they now participate in recess/lunch football and are involved in the schools mixed gender competitive football matches.
- 2.9 The discussion then moved to focus on concerns raised in relation to recurring problem of **children dropping out** from the EITC sessions.
- 2.9.1 It was highlighted that in the project 31 children, for varying reasons including the weather being too bad, children not enjoying the sessions and/or simply not wanting to come, dropped out of the programme. It was apparent that some children were chosen who simply did not want to come to the sessions in the first place. Discussions suggested that incentives may be an option to boost reduce or manage drop out.
- 2.9.2 It was highlighted that EITC is based around participation, however it is clear from the results that every school has had problems with drop out. Conversation then suggested that there was no tracking of drop out rates and/or reasons for this drop out by the coach.

The way forward

3. It appears that this programme did not actually identify a specific strategic aim. It was suggested that a specific strategic aim must be recognized for future programmes to have the potential to deliver significant results.
4. It was suggested that a possible way forward would be to develop a programme that specifically attends to the obesity agenda and/or behaviour change.
5. To do this it was highlighted that a specifically targeted selection criteria aimed at the 'at risk' children, in future projects could potentially enhance the positive results identified by the research (See 2.5).
6. It is apparent that a more formal process of tracking child drop out over time may be needed. For example, recording how many children drop out and why they are dropping out. This may be beneficial in order to prevent drop out.
7. It was also suggested that drop could be reduced by selecting the children that want to play football. However, such selection criteria are dependent on the strategic aim of the project.
8. On top of this it was suggested that incentives could be used to help promote the attendance of the children at the sessions. This could help promote good behaviour in the children and help encourage the children achieve specific strategic goals that a coach could set for children to achieve.
9. It appeared from the discussions that the information regarding the girls recess behaviour change and increased participation could be valuable for EITC.

3.0 The coach – summation of discussion



- 3.1 Conversation began by highlighting that after interviewing the coaches (n=6), each highlighted the importance of integrating fun and enjoyment into their coaching sessions. Additionally, the coaches highlighted that the coach must be 'enthusiastic' 'a good role model for the children to look up to' and 'a good listener'.
- 3.2 It was highlighted that some coaches used plenty of encouragement throughout and were extremely enthusiastic. For example, some coaches would make a conscious effort to get to know the children by asking the children's names, high five-ing them, asking them questions and chatting to them. In this regard, they appeared to build a genuine rapport with the children.
- 3.3 The focus of conversation then moved onto the children's experiences of the coaches and the sessions. It was highlighted that the children stated the coaches played some very fun and enjoyable games, which the children really enjoyed. Furthermore, some of the demonstrations were described as 'great'.
- 3.3.1 Discussions then highlighted that overall the children enjoyed the sessions and had some really good experiences. It was then suggested that EITC could be playing an important role in promoting positive behaviour and keeping the children active because the children have stated that they had enjoyed themselves. DP stated that 'it has been shown that children are more likely to stay physically active if they are enjoying themselves (Sallis, et al., 2000). Other studies demonstrated that early experiences in organised sport (7-12 years of age) are

the most important, and the main reason children's participation is fun and enjoyment. However, within these the emphasis on playing rather than training.

- 3.3.2 It was highlighted that some children remarked about some parts of the sessions, which they did not enjoy and therefore had unfavourable memories of.
- 3.4 Discussions following this suggested that some coaches appeared to be forgetting (or do not know) that they are coaching these children with a view to changing their attitudes and behaviour towards physical activity in a positive way. This relates to action strategy 3, as highlighted in the way previous way forward section.
- 3.5 Of the coaching sessions observed by DP, the content did not differ greatly. Coaches would often deliver very similar sessions to one another. It was discussed that the coaches have some general session plans at their disposal. However they appeared to be used in an ad-hoc and hap-hazard manor.
- 3.5.1 DP outlined that whilst interviewing the coaches some of them highlighted that there was no in house training. One coach explained that *'if you have a new session or drill, you just chat about it over the table'*. This is not to say that such a 'shared practice' culture should be discouraged, rather, it appears that such experiences offer the potential for inconsistent practice, in that EITC cannot be sure what their coaches are delivering.
- 3.6 Conversation then moved to focus on the fact that it appeared that the coaches with the most experience with working with children in community settings and who appeared to aspire to 'self-develop' within EITC, and not (say) the academy at Everton or other clubs, delivered the sessions with more fluency. In effect, there appears to be a clear distinction between and community oriented coach and a performance oriented coach.
- 3.6.1 Discussions then suggested that there may be an apparent mismatch in the skills of the coach and the skills needed to deliver a session to primary school children. It was suggested that this may be an underlying problem for EITC. Everyone in EITC has a FA level 2 coaching qualification or better. This level of qualification is a pre-requisite for many coaches before employment. It was suggested that this may somehow affect the perceptions of the coach and their associated practice (i.e., delivering a 'performance' oriented session as opposed to letting the children play in an 'activity' oriented session). It was noted that most coaches employed gain experience through watching other coaches. Therefore, they are more likely to conform to an existing 'way of doing things' (organisationally socialised), which may not necessarily meet the objectives of a programme.
- 3.7 The discussions then moved on to elements of perceived poor coaching and general working practice. Issues that arose focused around the coaches delivering an unsuitable session for certain abilities, a lack of flexibility in coaching for a mixed ability group, the frustrations of the coach and the inappropriate manner concerning the coach behaviour. Consequently, DP highlighted that negative experiences for the children and poor child-coach rapport was evidence.
- 3.8 The children's general behaviour was discussed. It was highlighted that some children were well behaved, in the sense that they tried hard, listened and were not disruptive. It was also

highlighted that disruptive behaviour was a recurrent problem in the schools (in some cases this poor behaviour could be expected with many 'disruptive' children being selected for the coaching sessions). It was also suggested that this may be an outcome of not having a clear selection criteria.

- 3.8.1 It was highlighted that the children were coached by many different coaches with varying boundaries and varying measures of discipline. Without clear boundaries set disciplinary procedures and group management techniques, it appears that the children found it difficult to adjust to the different coaches. DP stated that some children highlighted their displeasure '*we got sent out for doing keepy ups*', '*and we got sent out for talking*'. The type of children we are working with need discipline, but it must be structured with clear boundaries. These bad experiences could have detrimental effects on physical activity and ultimately hinder the strategic aim of the project(s).
- 3.8.2 It was then highlighted that some coaches were able to control the session very well. Showing good operational skills, good session management and control of the children, whilst others appeared to struggle and become frustrated with their session (and the children).
- 3.9 The conversation then focused on the issue of lateness. It was highlighted that on a number of occasions the coach had arrived late to the session. In some cases coaches were up to fifteen minutes late. The reasons for lateness varied from, '*I didn't know I was doing the session*', and '*I don't know where it is*'. On one occasion the '*I don't know where it is*' excuse was used after one coach's third session at the school. With this, on two occasions an inexperienced volunteer was dropped off and left with DP. Furthermore, there were three occasions in particular where DP had to begin the session without any balls, bibs or cones because the coaches were late by 15 minutes or more. It was highlighted that on one occasion a parent made a comment to DP, '*don't you think you should ring the coaches to see where they are?*' This discussion was concluded by highlighting that no session appeared to last the full hour as the children were not ready or because the coach was late.
- 3.9.1 The main issue that recurred during the conversation concerned the continuity of the coach. The children did not know what or who to expect each week. This was highlighted as being particularly frustrating for the children, as in one instance a coach promised tournaments for the children, however a different coach came the following week and a different session was organised. This happened often, as the coaches would not know what sessions the children had had and which they hadn't. This was particularly frustrating for the children, which they expressed to DP and the coaches, which most likely led to some children behaving poorly.

The way forward

10. It was suggested that a staff initiation and development package engaging all new and existing coaching staff through a series of workshops specifically highlighting expectations and practice within a session, multi-skills, inclusion off all and how to promote behaviour change in children may be explored.
11. Lateness was highlighted as a reoccurring, and (more worryingly) accepted problem. There appeared to be no checks on whether a coach presented themselves on time for a session. It appears that the trust that EITC have in their staff is being ill-treated.
12. It was suggested that clearer, logically progressive and more coherent session plans would diminish issues concerning unsuitable sessions and lack of difference in the content of the session. In this regard, the school would have some idea of what to expect, the coaches would have more ideas on what to coach and, if a coach was covering a session for another then they would know the children's previous session experiences and deliver an appropriate session (e.g., coach A has done 3 weeks of a 12 week behaviour/lifestyle change project for girls, coach B is covering, he checks what week they are on and knows exactly where the children are at).
13. Additionally, it may be useful for coaches to formally reflect on their session (e.g., record what worked well, what didn't, what facilities are available etc). This would help the 'covering' coaches and also the development of a more coherent programme of sessions for the children. Furthermore, EITC would be able to monitor exactly what each coach is delivering by checking the session evaluations. An element of trust is then taken away, potentially giving EITC more control and safety in what content is being delivered.

- 14II. With this, broader issues concerning possibilities to 'self-develop' within EITC must also be considered. It was suggested that it may be pertinent to review the role of the coach and associated role and person specifications to better reflect the needs of the programme and/or EITC.
- 15) It was agreed that EITC could revisit their code of conduct for their coaches. Schools and children could then be made aware of the code of conduct at the beginning of a programme. EITC and the coaches would be then become empowered and engaged in clearer directives when children misbehave (i.e., the coach knows exactly what to do and there is no confusion with the children when covering coaches come in).
- 16) The elements of poor coaching and general working practice appeared to 'ring some alarm bells' with GJ and PC. However, it appears pertinent to consider the coaches' perspective of their role. The coaches appear to be left to deliver their own content, and, at times, appear to be left without support. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the coaches' workload was extensive (to say the least).

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the reconnaissance phase included 6 coaches and 4 schools covering a broad part of the EITC team. At this stage, it worth remembering that the observations and incidents expressed by the researcher (DP) throughout the discussions were based on actual experiences and reflects the perceptions of the researcher at that time. In this regard, the reconnaissance phase offers EITC the researcher's perceptions of current practice.

The ensuing discussion has identified a number of potential action strategies for consideration within the next phase of the research programme, which have been highlighted in the way forward sections. These action strategies are listed below.

1. The discussion highlighted that 'ideally' the coaches would arrive in good time and the children would be ready and prepared.
 - 2I. It was suggested that the schools need to be seen as the key facilitator in driving the project through direct involvement of teachers. With this the ownership of the project is passed onto the schools, therefore when problems arise the schools can be consulted and reminded of their roles and responsibilities to the project.
 - 2II. Therefore, EITC need to ensure schools are aware of their responsibilities and are encouraged to fully embrace the project (ideally) through the head teacher. This suggests that EITC need to 'sell' what they are offering to the schools more purposely.
 - 2III. It appears that it may be beneficial to draw up more formal and clear expectations of the school's responsibilities, and clear guidelines as to the role of the teacher(s), the children and the coach. Therefore, each party has clarity in their responsibilities and roles concerning the project.

3. It appears that this programme did not actually identify a specific strategic aim. It was suggested that a specific strategic aim must be recognized for future programmes to have the potential to deliver significant results.
4. It was suggested that a possible way forward would be to develop a programme that specifically attends to the obesity agenda and/or behaviour change.
5. To do this it was highlighted that a specifically targeted selection criteria aimed at the 'at risk' children, in future projects could potentially enhance the positive results identified by the research (See 2.5).
6. It is apparent that a more formal process of tracking child drop out over time may be needed. For example, recording how many children drop out and why they are dropping out. This may be beneficial in order to prevent drop out.
7. It was also suggested that drop could be reduced by selecting the children that want to play football. However, such selection criteria are dependent on the strategic aim of the project.
8. On top of this it was suggested that incentives could be used to help promote the attendance of the children at the sessions. This could help promote good behaviour in the children and help encourage the children achieve specific strategic goals that a coach could set for children to achieve.
9. It appeared from the discussions that the information regarding the girls recess behaviour change and increased participation could be valuable for EITC.
10. It was suggested that a staff initiation and development package engaging all new and existing coaching staff through a series of workshops specifically highlighting expectations and practice within a session, multi-skills, inclusion off all and how to promote behaviour change in children may be explored.
11. Lateness was highlighted as a reoccurring, and (more worryingly) accepted problem. There appeared to be no checks on whether a coach presented themselves on time for a session. It appears that the trust that EITC have in their staff is being ill-treated.
12. It was suggested that clearer, logically progressive and more coherent session plans would diminish issues concerning unsuitable sessions and lack of difference in the content of the session. In this regard, the school would have some idea of what to expect, the coaches would have more ideas on what to coach and, if a coach was covering a session for another then they would know the children's previous session experiences and deliver an appropriate session (e.g., coach A has done 3 weeks of a 12 week behaviour/lifestyle change project for girls, coach B is covering, he checks what week they are on and knows exactly where the children are at).
13. Additionally, it may be useful for coaches to formally reflect on their session (e.g., record what worked well, what didn't, what facilities are available etc). This would help the 'covering' coaches and also the development of a more coherent programme of sessions for the children. Furthermore, EITC would be able to monitor exactly what each coach is delivering by checking the session evaluations. An element of trust is then taken away, potentially giving EITC more control and safety in what content is being delivered.
14. It was agreed that someone whose aspiration is to use EITC, as a stepping stone to an academy may not be the most ideal person to be engaged in coaching children, with a view to promoting physical activity in schools.

- 14II. With this, broader issues concerning possibilities to 'self-develop' within EITC must also be considered. It was suggested that it may be pertinent to review the role of the coach and associated role and person specifications to better reflect the needs of the programme and/or EITC.
- 15) It was agreed that EITC could revisit their code of conduct for their coaches. With a view to making schools and children aware of the code of conduct at the beginning of a programme. EITC and the coaches would be empowered and engage in clearer directives when children misbehave (i.e., the coach knows exactly what to do and there is no confusion with the children when covering coaches come in). From the results it appeared that coaches that clearly set rules and boundaries delivered more fluent sessions.
- 16) The elements of poor coaching and general working practice appeared to 'ring some alarm bells' with GJ and PC. However, it appears pertinent to consider the coaches' perspective of their role. The coaches appear to be left to deliver their own content, and, at times, appear to be left without support. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the coaches' workload was extensive (to say the least).

Following the completion of the reconnaissance phase, having discussed the findings; we now need to move towards a development of an action strategy. Action research aims at developing a process that leads to the engagement of practitioners to encourage improvements in working practice. The process we have been through is aimed at encourage thinking around making these changes to improve working practice, by creating a number of action strategies. The next phase of action research will require us to identify specific action strategies to take us forward.

Once identified the researcher will act as the key facilitator regarding the promotion of the action strategies decided upon and is responsible for monitoring these changes into the next phase. We envisage the next phase will be 6-12 months in duration.



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TO: Gary/Peter

Please find enclosed the summation of the meeting that you attended on the Monday 16th July 2007.

Once you have read through the report we need to arrange a meeting to agree a formal action strategy. This action strategy is part of the action research process, which is aimed at encouraging positive changes in working practice.

It was apparent from the meeting that whilst some of the feedback was surprising, you appeared to value the potential contribution that the action research process has and can offer to EITC.

As I have previously explained the data collection period of my MPhil, which I was originally employed to complete, has essentially finished. In order to progress my work through to PhD, and in fitting with the nature of action research, I need to engage with you as practitioners and monitor any changes that you decide upon for the next year. However, you should also be aware that progression to PhD is also dependent on further funding (hopefully) from Greggs Plc. The finer details of this can also be allocated some time at the next meeting.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you both for your continued support during this research process. I look forward to hearing from you in the in the near future to arrange a time for an 'action meeting' so that the feasibility and mechanics of the potential ways forward can be discussed with a view to agreeing a formal action strategy.

Best wishes

Daniel Parnell

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Appendix I - Action meeting summary

Summary report

Action meeting at Goodison 17/10/2007

Gary James, Peter Conn, David Richardson, Daniel Parnell

Aim of meeting: To decide which action to take forward from DP report.

The initial discussion recognised that there was a need to improve practice. It was highlighted that from the report it seemed clear that quality assurance (QA) would be an ideal way to take things forward on a coaching level and a business level. It was recognised that whilst there were other issues raised in DP's report that EITC would certainly want to act upon, the climate at which EITC are now in does not at present permit such sweeping reform.

The discussion then focused on the how to take QA forward. It was highlighted that the 25 new Liverpool School Sport Partnership (LSSP) coaches would be the primary focus of QA. It was noted that the QA that would be implemented should not necessarily be focused on the effectiveness of the coaches, but use a two tier approach to QA. It was recognised that one part of the approach would consist of the mechanics, and pragmatics of the coach, including the quantifiable and measurable aspect. The other tier would be the evaluation of the actual coaching practice.

It was highlighted that two Everton Academy coaches have been tasked to quality assure the new LSSP coaches. Concerns were raised over the 'performance oriented lens' that the academy coaches could adopt when observing the mainly 'process oriented' LSSP coaches (which was also the concerns expressed by the partnership development managers), however it was maintained that these coaches were experienced and informed in observation of coaches at a community level.

It was highlighted that DP's role would be to help and inform the academy coaches and facilitate meetings between them, myself and Peter Conn. It was noted that the development of a QA model of observation would be specifically attractive. Additionally, it was recognised that it may be useful to have myself and an experienced EITC coach involved. This would also help reduce fears within the LSSP that the coaches would be wrongly quality assured.

It was recognised from the meeting that a clear understanding of what the LSSP coaches are currently doing and what they are currently being asked to do must be ascertained. With this there must be clarity with the PDM, with regards to QA and it was highlighted that there was a need to have them 'on board'.

It was suggested that staff would be informed of DP's role, in facilitating the development of a QA model. It was documented that DP's role at the club could be announced, as the club's approach to develop QA throughout all business levels and that this is a staff development initiative to protect the coaches. With this it was suggested that it may be useful for me to present some results from my first year, with regards to physical activity levels and positive elements of practice. PC's role in this will be to act as the supervisor of the QA team to bring everyone involved together and to ensure that plans of action are met.

Action: DP and PC meet to build a plan for the implementation of the QA framework.

Appendix J - Quality assurance meeting

29 January 2008 Quality assurance meeting

Peter Conn, Simon Jones and Daniel Parnell

The meeting began with SR highlighting that we would develop the QA observation model within EitC and not with the LSSP coaches. It was suggested that once the QA project has been completed it can be offered to the LSSP.

The meeting then touched on how we can move things forward. A need was highlighted to find out the qualifications of each coach working within EitC, as well as their CRB, first aid and child protection status. It was suggested that this would help inform staff development/training days.

It was then discussed that there had been communication issues between the coaches and this was something that needed to be addressed. It was highlighted that the disability and social inclusion departments of EitC have session evaluations with attached feedback forms. It was suggested that a generic coach/session evaluation/feedback form should be formulated with consultation of some established coaches at EitC. With PC stated that once implemented these forms would form some part of each coach's annual performance reviews.

When the topic of coach observation was discussed it was decided that the best way to conduct any QA observation would be to have two set members of staff. It was suggested that the content of the QA would be shaped after consultation with coaches and volunteers.

The meeting concluded by stating that there was a need to up the tempo with this and to make some progress.

Actions points:

- Arrange meeting for coaches (Tuesday 5th Feb, 10am at EitC)
- DP to collate a database of qualifications and development needs of coaches

Appendix K – Coaches feedback report



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Dear Peter,

Since September 2007 I have visited EITC on numerous occasions. I have held formal and informal interviews and meetings with a variety of staff within EITC. This has been part of my role in encouraging positive changes in working practice, which in our case is to develop a number of quality assurance processes. The purpose of this report is to feedback my findings.

This work has been set up using an action research protocol, which is an ongoing cycle. The nature of action research is that after extensive reconnaissance by the researcher (2006-2007), feedback is given to encourage positive change in the workplace.

On reflection on our meeting it is clear that your perception is different from the coach's perceptions with regards to a number of issues, which include workload and time management. Based on my meetings it seems appropriate that I interview and engage in work shadow natured exploration of a sample of EITC coaches.

With this appears relevant for you to reflect on the findings from the report, your involvement in the quality assurance process, and produce a document stating your intentions, opinions and views attending to the following issues.

1. How has the results affected your initial idea of quality assurance?
2. Staff Development?
3. Engaging and accommodating the coaches and their opinions in the quality assurance process?
4. The 'next step'?

Yours sincerely

Daniel Parnell



A collaborative study between Everton in the Community (EitC) and the Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Science (RISES), Liverpool John Moores University.

Funded by GREGGS North West.



Report – 07th April 2008

Quality Assurance

The following report offers a summary of the coach's perceptions and opinions with regards to a number of quality assurance processes. This is part of the action research process that EITC are currently engaged in and are a direct result of Mr Gary James and Mr Peter Conns decision to pursue the development of quality assurance processes. The researcher's role within this process is to help stimulate conversation around encouraging positive changes in working practice.

This report offers the researchers associated findings from September 2007 to April 2008 and has been produced from formal and informal meetings and conversations with EITC staff.

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1.0 Session Plans

To begin conversation around the topic of session plans DP deemed it appropriate to highlight some of the background issues that have been identified by the research. This related to the fact that it was coaches could not consistently deliver a programme each week for whatever reason and it was often the case that the coach assigned to covering the session would not know coaching topics had been covered previously. DP also highlighted the various consequences this had on the group and the fluency of sessions.

It was highlighted that there was a definite need for coaches to complete session plans for preparation and reflection. DP showed the coaches some examples of session plans forms that must be completed by the Liverpool School Sport Partnership (LSSP) coaches and current EITC multi-skills coaches (see appendices).

It was highlighted by the coaches that they do have set themes and plans; however they often change to accommodate various circumstances that may develop within any one session. The coaches highlighted that despite there being certain themes each coach would deliver differently to one another.

The coaches stated that session's plans should consider including the following aspects;

- Be part of a specific programme of work (6 week/12 week)
- Themes for each session
- Warm up
- Skill development
- Main factors
- Action points for next session

(The coaches added that it must be simple, easy to fill in, and one side A4)

With this the coaches suggested that there could be a progressive development of resource cards that had specific themes for specific programmes of work. It was added that this would be useful for both current and new staff.

2.0 Session feedback forms

DP presented the coaches with the forms that are currently being used within the disability section of EITC and also the various forms of evaluation that the LSSP use with their coaches (see appendices).

It was suggested that a generic session feedback form should be produced with the following in mind:

- The main link/or teacher should complete the form (upon the coaches exit)
- A section for general quotes from the main link.
- A section for feedback from the youths/children involved.

On top of this the coaches have highlighted that there is a huge urgency to develop specific questionnaires that can help represent the effect that their sessions are having. With this the regular collection of photographs and videos of sessions would also provide considerable merit when compiling funding applications.

3.0 Quality Assurance Model

DP explained that the plan was to develop a two tier quality assurance model that would on one level collate all the statistics needed to satisfy EITC, and on the other involved an assigned person observing the coaching practice of EITC staff.

3.1 Observation of coaches

The coaches felt that the following would be acceptable criteria to be assessed upon during a session:

- Health and safety
- Engaging the participants
- Appropriate sessions (age and ability)
- Enjoyable
- Punctual
- Equipment
- Planned
- Presentation
- Communication
- Needs of group addressed
- Feedback from the group

The coaches felt it may be useful to develop a pre session checklist to ensure that you are prepared for session. This would include some of the following amongst others; risk assessment (completed/or copied), how many participants, ability, background, age, etc.

3.2 Statistics

The issue with gathering statistics was discussed on a number of occasions. It was highlighted that if the main contact could provide all of the statistics then that would help the coaches greatly and ensures that all information was correct.

The coaches highlighted that they needed different statistics in different sections of EITC. DP suggested that one coach in the school development programme might not knowingly engage with disabled children. It was then stated that when applying for funding the statistics could be greatly enhanced if all EITC figures were brought together with one spreadsheet. It was agreed that this would be beneficial and that the following would aspects should be included:

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Post Code
- Gender
- Disability (and which one/s)
- Ethnicity

4.0 Staff Development

From DP and PC meetings a need for a staff development form was highlighted. It was produced and circulated on several occasions to EITC staff (see appendices). DP has brought together the information from the forms on to one spreadsheet (see appendices).

It has been highlighted that when staff development was discussed with the coaches a number of issues were raised. The following list specifies the issues that rose:

- 'There is no time made available for training opportunities'.
- 'There is huge need for resources both human and financial'.
- 'The funding we have applied for doesn't totally cover us'.
- 'Specific awards are needed for different coaches'.
- 'We need time to observe other coaches in our field's'.
- 'I personally think everyone should have their disability and SAQ awards'
- 'We need more qualified tutors'.
- 'We need plenty of notice for training events'.

On top of this coaches highlighted their dissatisfaction in a number of other areas.

Job specifications - *'it's laughable'*

Workload - *'it's abuse' 'I just feel neglected'*

TOIL - *'it does not come close to covering my hours'*

Last years bonus - *'it's ridiculous, we had lots of extra work to complete and the grounds men get more than us. It's a joke'.*

It has noted that on reflection PC perceptions differ from the coaches with regards to a number of issues and that time management incompetence (amongst others issues) may be present in EITC staff. It appears appropriate at this stage for DP to try and better understand the day-to-day existence of the EITC staff.

5.0 Concluding remarks

On reflection there has been plenty of input from the EITC staff to help produce the information provided. However, there is currently a lack of clarity of how the quality assurance processes will be developed into the 'next step'.

With this appears relevant for PC to reflect on the findings from the report, his involvement in the quality assurance process, and to produce a document stating his intentions, opinions and views attending to the following issues.

- 1) How has the results affected your initial idea of quality assurance?
- 2) Staff Development?
- 3) Engaging and accommodating the coaches and their opinions in the quality assurance process?
- 4) The 'next step'?