Introduction

In May 2002 the Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR) conducted a workshop of key stakeholders within youth sport to discuss issues and strategies to enhance youth sport programs in WA.

The workshop identified the difficulty of retaining youth in their sport as a major issue. Research into the drop-out rates of youth from sport echoes these concerns.

• A survey of WA school children in 1996 (Taggart and Sharp) found that although 80 per cent of children aged 11–12 participated in sport, by the time they reached 16–17 years the figures had dropped to 57 per cent. These figures included school, club and social sport.

• This survey also acknowledged that of the total number of youth who dropped out of sport, 42 per cent did so during the transition between Years 7 and 8.

• More recent research indicates these trends are continuing. At the end of 2003 a large scale survey of WA children’s physical activity levels and sports participation was conducted by the Physical Activity Taskforce.

To ensure sport is attractive to young people, organisations delivering youth sport must fully understand why young people participate in and drop out of sport.

This resource provides some simple guidelines for making sport more youth-friendly, as well as showcasing initiatives that have successfully addressed youth participation.

Why do young people play sport?

• Fun and socialisation – many are drawn to organised club sport through friends, and value the sense of belonging associated with the club.

• Physical, emotional and mental benefits (e.g. enhanced physical fitness and ability to deal with stress).

• Learning new skills.

• Being part of a team and working together.

Why do they drop out?

• Time clash with other activities (i.e. leisure, social or work).

• The sport becomes boring.

• Conflict with study and work commitments.

• Over-emphasis on winning by coaches or parents.

• Change to another sport.

• Transport difficulties, costs.

• Young person experiences or witnesses bias or discrimination.

Listening is the key

To continue the success of your junior sporting club it is important that you listen to what youth are telling you and adapt your programs so that they are relevant to the youth market. It is not always easy to move away from tradition, but there are a number of simple changes that you can make to your club that will make it more youth-friendly.
Checklist
(Adapted from Team Vol 4, Issue 5, Nov 2002).

Ask participants what they want from sport

Be flexible.
• Be prepared to change:
  • length and timing of season;
  • times of training and games;
  • length of games;
  • rules; and
  • clothing requirements.
• Consider young people’s study and work commitments.
• Consider working parents and their schedules.

Reduce the competitive element and enhance the fun aspect of your sport

• Discuss with the club, coaches and parents the positives of focusing on participation rather than the result.
• Develop and promote policies of equality – equal field time for all.
• Focus on developing each individual to achieve his/her best.
• Ignore premiership points and fairest and best trophies for primary-aged competitors.
• Improve professionalism by providing coaching courses to all junior coaches.

Provide a welcoming environment

• Use a young, existing member to welcome all new youth members.
• Provide for, support and engage parents.

Revitalise the social aspect

Provide opportunities for members to bring friends to the club.
• Gear social functions to the youth age group – get their input.

Provide learning opportunities for all volunteers

• Provide opportunities for young members and parent volunteers to acquire and practice coaching, officiating and administrative skills. This will build individual confidence and enhance the quality of the program you’re delivering.

Facilitate transport

• Organise car-pooling between members and parents.

Offer different pathways for competition and participation

• Twilight, mid-week or shortened competitions.

Provide a link between junior and senior club

When working with schools:
• coincide school clinics with the school physical education program;
• shorten seasons to coincide with school terms; and
• run shortened programs in schools prior to registration dates.
Good practice examples — sport

The following are examples of programs that have proven to be successful in implementing youth-friendly strategies. They were collected from a variety of organisations and reflect the great work being done in the community.

You are free to contact these organisations if you need further information.

Incentive scheme/certificate program (squash)

Problem:
Squash WA identified a lack of junior players registering for tournaments due to the perceived elitism associated with tournament events. They needed to implement a program that would attract and retain the non-elite junior squash player.

Program:
A certificate program was established in 2001 based on skill development and knowledge of the game. Six levels were created to cater for kids aged 7-16. Kids move on to the next level once they have fulfilled the requirements of the previous level. An independent coach conducts assessments.

The program is run at the club level. The state sporting association (SSA) provides administrative support in the form of registering the players and providing the certificates. The SSA secured sponsorship for the program that pays for a logo t-shirt to accompany each level.

Events (modified tournaments) are organised that allow the same level kids to play against each other. These events are a lot shorter and more social than tournament play.

An extra step following the certificates is the Platinum Rating that incorporates the administration side of the sport. Satisfying all this criteria entitles the participant to a 50 per cent subsidy on a Level 1 Coaching Course.

The program and its levels are reassessed every six months.

Benefits:

- Thirty per cent increase in registered junior players.
- Increased numbers participating in tournaments.
- Improvement in skill levels.
- Assists coaches in planning progress of their players.
- Provides developmental feedback for participants.
- Increased motivation of participants.

Contact:
Squash WA on 08 9225 7255.
Linking with the school curriculum (rugby league)

**Problem:**
Introducing an unfamiliar sport to primary school children. Increased demands on school teachers to deliver quality sport programs.

**Program:**
A CD-ROM entitled ‘Pass, Catch, Kick’ was developed by the Australian Rugby League Foundation to meet the educational outcomes for each primary school age group. Eight sequential lessons for each age group are outlined in both diagrammatic and video format.

Also included are teaching notes for each exercise, equipment needs and exercise variations.

Each lesson is broken down into warm-up exercises, skill acquisition and skill application. Each lesson prints out in a one-button process.

The exercises included are all fun or game-based rather than being simply drills.

**Benefits:**
- Provides fun activities to develop fundamental skills of passing, catching and kicking for primary-aged children.
- Provides teachers a user-friendly means of providing lessons that meet educational outcomes.
- Rugby league increases and enhances the delivery and development of their sport throughout the state.
- The CD-ROM is complimented with teacher in-servicing.

**Contact:**
WA Rugby League on 08 9228 9275.

Tracking participant information (netball)

**Problem:**
WA Netball wanted to be able to pass on local information about clinics and competitions direct to interested young netballers.

**Program:**
Schoolnet Membership Program – database of primary school participants.

Every student who participates in a school-based netball program is given a membership form that is completed and returned to WA Netball. Each membership receives three passes to West Coast Fever games.

**Benefits:**
- Improved communication lines by allowing information to be passed directly to interested participants about special events, clinics etc. in their area.
- Database of interested primary school participants established.
- Assists with funding opportunities.
- Provides opportunity to connect participants to their local clubs, developing links between the schools and the local netball association.

**Contact:**

Incorporating school and club teams (volleyball)

Problem:
Rossmoyne Volleyball Club needed to increase its junior numbers.

Program:
Approached local high school as to how the club and school could unite forces so both groups benefited.

School teams play in the club competition under the club name allowing participants to play with their friends.

Older players coach the younger age groups (education outcomes).

Training occurs after school, at school and games on the weekend.

Benefits:
• Training sessions are at the school (easy access for participants).
• Discounted gym hire (greater use of facilities).
• Club purchases balls for both club and school to use (sharing resources).
• Club provides coaches for school teams and national competitions.
• School uniform is club uniform (saves on costs).
• Club members who coach school teams get discounted fees (encourage volunteerism).

Contact:
Melville Volleyball Club on 08 9288 8522.

Improving transition from school program to club program (tennis)

Problem:
TennisWest identified that even though they had large numbers participating in their schools program, they did not enjoy much success in attracting these participants into club programs.

Program:
A four-staged process was introduced:

• Stage 1 – School visit by local club coach providing tuition and show bag for students, Level 0 coaching course for teachers and website competition.

• Stage 2 – Free fun day at local club to introduce students to the club environment.

• Stage 3 – Inexpensive three-week introductory club coaching program.

• Stage 4 – Rolling eight-week club coaching program with a strong focus on skill development. Six certificate levels for achievement.

Benefits:
TennisWest achieved a 10 per cent uptake from the school visit to the free fun day at the club and a 75 per cent uptake from the free fun day to the three-week club coaching program.

Tennis West also experienced increased retention rates from their rolling eight-week certificate program. It also provides feedback and incentives to the participants.

Contact:
TennisWest on 08 6462 8307.
Retaining non-competitive participants  
(Royal Life Saving)

**Problem:**

Losing children that no longer want the structure of swimming and water safety lessons and are not interested in the competitive nature of squad swimming.

**Program:**

The Junior Lifeguard Club provides alternatives for these participants with the emphasis on fun while maintaining strong club feelings and loyalties. Program opportunities include swimming skills, fitness, competition, life saving knowledge, leadership, teamwork and community education programs. Members record their achievements in their personal waterlog.

**Benefits:**

- Friends can join together and not be differentiated on the grounds of performance.
- Awards and feedback on individual progress is provided.
- Results in members becoming competent in swimming and life saving skills while participating in an atmosphere that is fun.
- Retains non-competitive participants within the club structure.

**Contact:**

Royal Life Saving Society  on 08 9383 8200.

Promoting junior program through schools (touch)

**Problem:**

No junior competitions were being run for young competitors by the local touch associations.

**Program:**

The state body worked with each local association to tailor a schools program specific to their situation. Each program was based on a 10-week course coinciding with the school term, focusing on skill development and concluding with a competition.

Cost was kept to a minimum and covered affiliation and insurance. The program was conducted at the association grounds one afternoon a week. The local association provided coaching and the state body had a representative present as professional support and to talk with parents.

The state body promoted the program by sending letters to PE teachers and flyers specific to each program to the schools within the area. Flyers emphasised the fun factor of the course, including lucky dip prizes for the kids.

**Benefits:**

- First program received 31 enrolments.
- Increased volunteer base, as parents were eager to get involved.
- Parents were happy to get involved as it didn’t interfere with school holidays.

**Contact:**

TouchWest on 08 9319 4600.
Facilitating transition from junior to senior ranks (University Hockey Club)

Problem:
The University Hockey Club found a large number of players were lost or disenchanted during the transition from junior to senior competition.

Program:
A program was introduced to ensure a smooth transition between junior and senior ranks:

- Senior coach regularly attends junior training and games.
- Club captain speaks to the juniors outlining the make up of the senior teams and the opportunities available to them the following year (social vs competitive).
- Development team of juniors entered into a senior competition.
- Opportunity provided to train with the second top senior side.
- Junior training times immediately precede senior training.
- Top squad members coach junior grades.
- Personal invitation to senior pre-season and trials.

Benefits:
- Junior members already feel part of the senior club as they are familiar with their teammates and routine.
- Junior members have been made welcome and aware of the opportunities ahead of them, so are informed to make their own decision.
- Senior members’ involvement with the junior teams promotes volunteerism culture within the club.

Contact:
University Hockey Club on 08 9383 9652.
Retention strategies (South West Football League)

Problem:
Large drop-out rates between juniors and colts in the South West region of WA.

Program:
The Football Development Trust (FDT) commissioned a research project to investigate drop-out rates. Recommendations from the report included:

• Where the likelihood of an uneven competition is identified, the junior associations undertake to split the age level into two divisions (aim: even competitions).

• Increase access to elite players (WAFL) to attend training sessions and junior club functions (aim: role modelling).

• That colts coaches and senior players regularly attend junior training sessions and hold joint training sessions with colts and under 16 teams towards the end of the season (aim: ease transition).

• Provide appropriate joint senior/junior social functions for last year junior players (aim: ease transition).

• That senior players be selected as mentors to support and provide advice to last year junior players (aim: role modelling).

Benefits:
Surveys, workshops and interviews with youth and other key stakeholders were conducted to investigate reasons why players do not continue with their football once they have completed junior football. The data obtained provides the league with relevant information and issues on which the South West Football League can formulate future directions that are relevant and cater for young peoples’ needs.

Contact:
FDT South West on 08 9721 7878.
Good practice examples — local government

The following are examples of programs implemented by local government that have proven to be successful. They were collected from a variety of organisations and are no way exhaustive of the great work being done in the community. All contributors were happy to be contacted by those wishing to get further information.

Recreational equipment voucher scheme (Town of Kwinana)

Problem:
Access to youth sports for financially disadvantaged families.

Program:
The scheme aims to assist low-income families to access junior sports. The vouchers allow ratepayers to nominate $3.50 of their rates directly to a participating junior organisation to help them purchase equipment. The Kwinana Community Recreation Development Trust (KCRDT) manages the scheme.

The Town of Kwinana sets aside a fund to facilitate the Recreation Voucher Scheme. The vouchers are distributed along with the annual rate notice. When all rates are received the face value of vouchers for each club is calculated and a cheque sent to the club. Clubs must provide an annual statement of how funds have been spent.

Benefits:
Local clubs are provided with financial assistance to provide equipment for junior participants. It has shown to be of great benefit to an area that has a low socio-economic population. The Town of Kwinana now has a high proportion of participating juniors. Juniors also have the opportunity to try new sports because fees are kept to a minimum.

The scheme has proved to be very popular with both clubs and ratepayers. When the scheme first started there was a budget of $4,000 and 16 participating clubs. This has grown to 24 clubs and a budget of $15,000. It has enjoyed continued support from ratepayers and council.

Contact:
Manager Community and Recreation Services, Town of Kwinana on 08 9419 2222.
Calunga Aboriginal School sports program (City of Swan)

Problem:
Access to sport programs and facilities for students of Calunga Aboriginal School.

Program:
Altone Park Leisure Centre (City of Swan) and Calunga Aboriginal School have developed a term program to provide sports and coaching lessons for students of the school. A variety of sports and activities run for 4–5 weeks each and then change to a new sport. The program caters for up to 40 students from 5–14 years of age.

Altone Park Leisure Centre provides court space and a minimum of two instructors with a third on standby if required. The sports are chosen to coincide with seasonal sports. Instructors conduct coaching and games on the program.

Benefit:
The program has been operating since October 2001. Staff are now looking at incorporating aquatic programs.

Contact:
Program Development Officer, Altone Park Leisure Centre, City of Swan on 08 9267 9040.

Access ALL Areas (City of Swan)

Problem:
Access to youth sports for disadvantaged youth.

Program:
Access All Areas is the operational name for the City of Swan’s Youth Recreation Fund. It is a flexible and responsive way to target individual barriers that inhibit or exclude young people from participating in recreation and leisure activities.

How does it work?

• Organisation identifies a young person who cannot equitably access normal recreational activities.
• Organisation and young person refer to the Access All Areas Activity Register to consider available options.
• An Access All Areas Pass is issued.
• Young person presents the pass as valid tender for the chosen activity.
• Recipient service provider invoices the City of Swan for the total value of passes received.
• Invoice paid by City of Swan.

Benefits:

• Increase opportunities for young people to recreate where barriers to participation exist.
• Increase health, wellbeing, skill development and sense of community for young people.
• Overcome significant barriers that contribute to income inequalities.
• Improve coordination and communication between youth agencies, recreation providers, community groups, government and local businesses.

• Improve the general level of understanding and acceptance of young people within the community.

Contact:
Program Development Officer, Altone Park Leisure Centre, City of Swan on 08 9267 9040.

How local governments are assisting junior sport

Easy access to facilities for youth sports

• Introduction of policy that junior sporting teams can have use of the council buildings or active recreation areas free of charge (City of Nedlands, Joondalup, Town of Kwinana).

• Introduction of policy that school groups can use their active recreation areas free of charge prior to 3:30pm (City of Nedlands).

Recognition and support of junior athletes and sporting clubs

• Annual Sports Club Awards that recognise both individual achievement and junior club management (City of Nedlands).

• Provision of scholarships to young athletes of free access to local government’s recreation facilities (City of Melville).

• Provision of small grants to sporting organisations wishing to develop new youth initiatives (City of Nedlands).

• Provision of small grants to individual athletes who are selected in state or national teams (City of Joondalup, City of Swan, City of Melville).

• Establish a community fund to provide one-off grants for equipment and start-up costs for junior sport groups (joint venture between City of Swan, LWP P/L and Ellenbrook Community Committee).

Program development

• Council Recreation Officers assist schools within the area to design, access and conduct junior sport programs (City of Joondalup).
Further information and resources

Youth sport organisations offer valuable opportunities for the youth of WA. They are generally run by hard-working, committed volunteers with the goal of providing the same life enriching experiences that they themselves were given in their youth. However it must be realised that the lifestyles and pressures on youth today have changed and that these changes must be reflected in the programs our industry delivers.

By understanding the varied issues accompanying youth participation in sport and by sharing information and ideas, youth sport organisations can successfully modify their programs and provide relevant and vibrant sport programs for the youth of today.

This resource is a collation of some of the successful programs many sport groups have already implemented that your organisation can adapt. Listed here are further resources and websites where you can get more ideas and assistance to deliver successful youth sport programs.

**Australian Sports Commission**
- Kelloggs Ready Set Go
- Sport Start
- Sport It
- Your Kids, Their Game

**Victorian Department of Sport and Recreation**
- User-friendly Sport – An ideas book to help sport and recreation clubs grow

**WA Disabled Sports Association**
[www.wadsa.org.au](http://www.wadsa.org.au)
- Willing and Able

**Sports Medicine Australia**
[www.sport.net.au/smawa](http://www.sport.net.au/smawa)

**Play By the Rules**
[www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)

**Arts Sport Recreation Industry Training Council**

What can you do?

As a proactive member of your club you can take on board the ideas and programs relevant to your organisation and adapt them to suit your specific needs. Clubs are only as vibrant as the people they have on board!
Other resources

This resource is part of the Club Development Officer Scheme, which provides assistance to Western Australian sport and recreation clubs and organisations to become better managed, more sustainable and to provide good quality services to members and participants.

Other resources in the series include:

1. Step-by-step to starting a new club
2. Planning for your club – The future is in your hands
3. Taking the lead! A guide for club presidents
4. The key to efficiency – The club secretary
5. Show me the money – A guide for the club treasurer
6. Effective club meetings – A guide for the chairperson
7. Take the ‘in’ out of ineffective – 10 steps to running successful meetings
8. Lighten the load and delegate – Help for the overworked committee member
9. You have the answers – Solving club problems
10. Marketing and promoting your club
11. Sponsorship – Seeking and servicing a sponsor
12. Establishing your club constitution and becoming incorporated
13. Risky business – A club guide to risk management
14. Clubs’ guide to volunteer management
15. Member protection for clubs
16. How to be more inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds
17. Passport into schools – Linking sports with schools
18. Youth sport – Junior sport policy
19. Long-term involvement – Junior sport policy
20. Getting young people involved – Junior sport policy
21. Physical growth and maturation – Junior sport policy
22. Sport pathways – Junior sport policy
23. Forming links – Junior sport policy
24. People making it happen – Junior sport policy
25. Quality coaching – Junior sport policy
26. Making sport safe – Junior sport policy
27. The law and sport – Junior sport policy
28. Top 20 tips for officials
29. Top 20 tips for successful coaching

You will find the full series of the booklets on the Department of Sport and Recreation’s ClubsOnline website: www.dsr.wa.gov.au/clubsonline
ClubsOnline

ClubsOnline www.dsr.wa.gov.au/clubsonline is the place for sport and recreation clubs in Western Australia to communicate with other clubs, the Department of Sport and Recreation and Club Development Officers. It provides clubs with an opportunity to share ideas and access useful club-related resources.

Some of the resources you will find on ClubsOnline include:

• Find a Club, which helps you search for and contact clubs in your area.

• Free club website. Simply register with Find a Club and your club will be eligible for its own simple-to-build website.

• Club self assessment tool.

• Volunteers exchange to browse for ‘clubs seeking volunteers’ or post your own notice under ‘volunteers seeking clubs’.

• Find my Club Development Officer. The Club Development Officer Scheme is a partnership with local governments across Western Australia to build the capacity of community-based clubs. A statewide network of Club Development Officers assists, supports and develops community-based sport and recreation clubs through education, facilitation and communication.

• Clubhouse resources including booklets, useful documents to download and a selection of podcasts.
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