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## **Sport policy and the structure of sport in the UK**

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### **TOPICS**

Sport policy in the UK from the nineteenth century to the present day • Theoretical frameworks for analysing sport policy • The current structure of sport in the UK

### **OBJECTIVES**

*At the end of this chapter you should be able to:*

- Understand how sport policy has developed historically;
- Identify how developments in sport policy have affected the UK's sporting structures;
- Understand how broader social policy developments have impacted on sport;
- Understand the roles of various sporting organisations and the relationships between them.

### **KEY TERMS**

**National governing body** – the organisation that governs a particular sport in a particular country (often known outside the UK as a sports federation).

**Political ideology** – a set of basic beliefs that offers a guide or mandate for policies and action.

**Sport policy** – policy directly related to sport, as well as other areas of policy that have an impact upon sport

## **OVERVIEW**

This chapter examines sport policy in the UK and the related issue of how sport is structured and managed. Knowledge of these issues is essential for anyone studying or working in sport in the UK. The chapter reviews historical developments in sport policy, as well as the current state of affairs. It also introduces a number of theoretical perspectives through which sport policy can be analysed. The latter part of the chapter considers sport's multifaceted structures – the various voluntary, public and private organisations and the role each performs. The chapter describes each of these organisations in turn and considers the ways in which they interact to support and deliver sport. Throughout, the chapter uses case studies to highlight developments in sport policy and to illustrate the structure of particular sporting organisations and the relationships between them.

### **CASE STUDY 1: OTHER POLICY AREAS IMPACTING ON SPORT**

It is important at the outset of any discussion of sport policy to recognise that, very often, the policies that impact sport may have had no initial relation to sport at all. While government sport policy has a direct influence on sport organisations, particularly on how they are funded, policy in other areas has an equally significant, if often unintended, impact. The following examples provide a good illustration of this.

#### *Working at height*

At first glance, it is difficult to see why regulations developed to promote safer practices for

those who work at height – window cleaners, builders, and so on – should affect sport. However, when policy makers in the UK were initially drafting legislation in 2003, following a European Directive on minimum safety standards for working at height, they did not consider the impact such legislation would have on those teaching and participating in certain sports – climbing, caving, abseiling and so on. The legislation, if it had passed, would have made no distinction between work on building sites and sporting activity and would have had a series of perverse impacts, making much standard sporting activity – climbing with single ropes, and so on – illegal.

The Sport and Recreation Alliance (called, at the time, the Central Council of Physical Recreation) realised the unintended, but serious, impact such legislation would have on various sporting activities. They therefore, along with a number of potentially affected national governing bodies (e.g., the British Mountaineering Council) and other organisations (e.g., Mountain Training UK), sought to meet the politicians and civil servants involved in the legislative process, explain the situation and seek solutions. This back-and-forth process took more than two years, but finally a co-ordinated campaign meant that, in 2005, the UK Government agreed to develop sector-specific Temporary Working at Heights Directive regulations for activities such as climbing and caving. These regulations exempted the sports from some of the regulations that were developed specifically for those working in other industries (building, scaffolding, and so on) and enabled the national governing bodies in climbing and caving to retain control of safety standards in their sports.

### *Immigration*

Again, it is hard to see why general immigration policy should have a particular impact on

sport. However, when the UK Government began developing its points-based system for inward migration in 2007, it soon became clear that the initial proposals could have significant detrimental effects. These included the possibility of:

- Overseas professional sports people being unable to join UK-based teams or play in UK tournaments;
- Overseas amateur sports people being treated as ‘migrants’ when wishing to visit the UK for sporting purposes; and
- National governing bodies of sport losing regulatory control of overseas sports persons within their sport.

The Government was clear in its intention of managing migration for the benefit of both the UK economy and society, by enabling only those who had the skills necessary to benefit the UK economy entry into the country. However, the Home Office officials charged with developing this system understandably were not aware of the potential adverse impacts on sport. As the Government consulted on its proposals, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and sporting interest groups, including the Sport and Recreation Alliance and its members, registered their concerns. As a result, sports bodies were invited to work with the Home Office and the UK Borders Agency to devise a system that was consistent with the Government’s overall objectives, but ensured that national governing bodies remained integral to the system, and that professional and amateur sports people were not unnecessarily excluded from the UK.

## **SPORT POLICY IN THE UK FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT DAY**

## **The early years**

Until the late 1950s, direct government involvement in sport was extremely rare. Instead, the field was dominated by individual national governing bodies of sport (NGBs), which had emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, many of today's NGBs, from the Football Association and the Rugby Football Union to the Amateur Swimming Association and the British Mountaineering Council, were formed in this period, as the UK led the way in codifying sports and establishing management structures to oversee their rules and regulations. However, while this was not a period of direct government involvement in sport, it is still possible to discern some general areas of government interest. Houlihan (1997) identifies three broad themes that characterise this movement.

- First, paternalism towards the 'lower classes'. As Holt (1989) points out, nineteenth-century philanthropy helped shape education and housing policy and likewise influenced policy directed at sport.
- Second, a concern to defend privilege. This was manifested in various disputes over access to the countryside, pitting wealthy landowners against a growing urban population eager to use the countryside for sport and recreation (Shoard 1987).
- Third, a belief that too much undisciplined leisure for the poor could pose a danger to social stability. As such, rational recreation was promoted, while street sports deemed more riotous were increasingly prohibited.

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of government interest in sport during this period related to public health. A concern with hygiene and disease within increasingly overcrowded

industrial cities led to the planning and provision of bath houses, swimming pools, public parks and playing fields. This reflected both the first and third themes of government interest described above, namely paternalism and the encouragement of rational recreation. As Jackson and Nesti (2001) point out, it also exemplified the functional and utilitarian view of sport – i.e. that sport can have a series of wider social and economic benefits – that has characterised sport policy for much of its history.

This ‘early’ period also saw the establishment, in 1935, of the Central Council of Recreative and Physical Training, which later became the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR) and has recently changed its name to the Sport and Recreation Alliance. Initially concerned with providing recreation for people in communities, CCPR soon became an umbrella body, representing a large number of NGBs and other sports bodies. Given the lack of a strategic approach to sport from government, CCPR played a key role in shaping policy in this period, particularly in the area of youth sport and recreation (Houlihan and White 2002).

### **A change of gear**

The second half of the twentieth century saw a step-change in government involvement and investment in sport. Indeed, as Coalter (2007: 9) states, ‘systematic central government interest in sport dates largely from the 1960s’. A significant landmark in this regard was the publication, in 1960, of *Sport and the Community*, the report of the Wolfenden Committee. The latter, set up by CCPR to examine sport and recreation in the UK, made 57 recommendations in areas such as coaching, facility provision and post-school participation. Its key proposal was that a Sports Development Council ought to be created, which would distribute public funding, but prove only indirectly accountable to government. In this way,

the Committee sought to protect the voluntary sector's central position within sport.

The report, as Houlihan and White (2002: 20) declare, 'had a substantial and long-term impact on the shape of British sport'. An Advisory Sports Council was established by the Labour Government in 1965 and, in 1972, under a Conservative administration, this was replaced by the Sports Council, which had executive, rather than solely advisory, powers. The establishment of the Sports Council effectively marked the Government's intention to become formally and strategically involved in sport.

The longer term impact of the Wolfenden Committee report was manifested in the increased provision of facilities for sport and recreation in the UK. This was highlighted in the report as a necessary step and was given impetus through the work of the Sports Council. Between 1972 and 1976, the Sports Council provided £4.7 million for a range of voluntary sector facilities (Houlihan 1997). This period also saw local authorities (the sub-national level of government in the UK) become key players in sport policy and the structure of sport in the UK. In the 1970s, it was local authorities that invested in the new facilities, supported by Sports Council grants. It was a period of massive expansion. For example, local authority provision of sport and leisure centres increased from four in 1970 to more than 1,000 by the end of the decade (Jackson and Nesti 2001).

This acceptance of sport as a legitimate responsibility of government was reinforced by the publication, in 1975, of a White Paper on Sport and Recreation (Department of the Environment 1975). This acknowledged the importance of sport for the general welfare of the community and emphasised the necessity of national and local government involvement alongside the existing contribution of the voluntary sector.

### **The free market in sport**



From 1979, the policies of successive Conservative governments had a major impact on sport. While there was little clear sport policy *per se*, the Government's broader objectives – minimising the role of the State at national and local level and introducing market forces in public services – were highly influential. The most significant policy development was the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), which required local authorities to open up a range of services, including the management of sport and leisure facilities, to free competition in the marketplace. This paved the way for private sector contractors to operate facilities and, later, for charitable trusts to do the same. The impact of CCT also highlights the fact that sport is often a 'policy taker', rather than a 'policy maker' (Dery 1999; King 2009). That is to say, sport is regularly affected by policies designed and implemented in other policy areas, such as health and education.

Jackson and Nesti (2001) argue that the rigidity of CCT led to an over-emphasis on financial efficiency at the expense of quality. Moreover, local authority investment in sport and recreation facilities slowed, effectively halting the massive expansion that defined the previous decade. Indeed, Houlihan (1997) suggests that this period witnessed a decline in local government's key role in fostering wider participation – partly due to financial pressures and partly because CCT resulted in homogenised provision and a reduced incentive for local authorities to take risks. While CCT has long been superseded by other performance management regimes, including Best Value (introduced by the New Labour Government in 1998), private contractors and charitable trusts are now key features of the sports management landscape.

In the 1990s, the status of sport within government improved. The British Sports Council was replaced by a UK Sports Council and an English Sports Council – now known as UK Sport and Sport England. The creation of the National Lottery in 1994 was yet another significant staging post for sports management in the UK, leading to the creation of state-of-

the-art facilities within local authorities, and an upgrade of the facility stock in many sports clubs. It also saw the introduction of funding for elite athletes, precipitating a modernisation process in many governing bodies, which until this date had not received significant amounts of public money, and now needed to adapt to their new responsibilities (Houlihan and Green 2009, Tacon and Walters 2016). In 1995, the Department of National Heritage (DNH), where sport policy was then co-ordinated, published *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH 1995), a wide-ranging document that reinforced several sport policy themes. It emphasised elite sport, traditional competitive sport in schools and accountability among national governing bodies.

### **The instrumental value of sport**

The election of the New Labour Government in 1997 resulted in another noticeable shift in sport policy. The main focus, during the next decade, was sport's presumed benefits – both economic and social. As Coalter (2007) points out, the increased emphasis on sport can be explained by key aspects of New Labour's agenda. Sport, it was argued, could contribute to a stronger civil society, address social exclusion, encourage active citizenship and help to develop social capital. Moreover, these presumed externalities were stated more precisely than ever before. The report of *Policy Action Team 10* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 1999: 23) stated that 'sport can contribute to neighbourhood renewal by improving communities' performance on four key indicators – health, crime, employment and education'. Yet, as Coalter (2007) and others point out, the evidence base around sport's social and economic outcomes is relatively weak and the report itself acknowledged this. Nevertheless, politicians and policy makers seized on the *potential* benefits of sport highlighted in the report and the latter has remained highly influential, underpinning much sport policy thinking since its publication.

Another important aspect of New Labour's broader agenda was its concern with 'joined-up' government, that is, the notion that key policy themes should be cross-cutting, not strictly demarcated. Here again, sport gained policy prominence precisely because of the assumption that its benefits were wide-ranging and its appeal transcended demographic boundaries. Houlihan and White (2002) describe this broader process as a shift from developing sport *in* the community to developing communities *through* sport. And such developments were also evident outside the UK. In Australia and Canada, certainly, there was a similar emphasis on sport's socio-economic benefits (Australian Sports Commission 2006; Bloom *et al.* 2005).

One further element of sport policy in this period was the emphasis on attracting major sporting events to the UK. Along with the successful bid for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the UK won the right to host the Rugby League World Cup (in 2013), the Commonwealth Games (in 2014), the Rugby Union World Cup (in 2015) and the Cricket World Cup (in 2019). In some ways, this represented a U-turn in stated sport policy. In 2002, in the key sport policy document, *Game Plan* (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002), the Government had stated that there was 'little evidence that hosting events has a significant influence on participation'. Yet many of these bids, not least the Olympic and Paralympic bid, emphasised the role these events could play in inspiring more people to take part in sport.

In 2007, after a decade of relatively coherent sport policy, things changed direction. In a break with New Labour's previous emphasis on the instrumental value of sport, James Purnell, the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, stated: 'Sport matters in itself ... too often sport is justified on the basis of its spill-over benefits' (Purnell 2007). This policy shift resulted in a firmer focus on sport for sport's sake – a shift back towards developing sport *in* the community. It also led to the restructuring of Sport England and a new three-year strategy (Sport England 2008), focused on increasing and maintaining participation, ensuring the quality of people's sporting experience and improving talent

development – more ‘traditional’ sport development goals. The broader government focus on sport’s presumed social and economic benefits was not abandoned, but the Department for Culture, Media and Sport now aimed to spread responsibility for funding to achieve these outcomes across a wider range of government departments (Tacon 2009).

### **Austerity bites**

From 2010, a new Conservative-led Coalition Government, acting in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008, pursued a broad policy of ‘austerity’. As in the 1980s, this economic policy, while not aimed directly at sport, has had drastic effects on many sport organisations. The Coalition Government (and, since 2015, the Conservative Government) have insisted on swingeing cuts to public expenditure, which has led to the cancellation or dramatic reduction of many local authority-run sport services, especially in the area of community sports development. As Hylton and Totten (2013) point out, this was accentuated by the necessity of (or preference for) maintaining spending on the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and funding for elite athletes.

One area of sport policy particularly affected by the ‘turn to austerity’ was sport in schools. Since 2002, successive New Labour governments had funded and implemented the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links Strategy (later termed the PE and Sport Strategy for Young People), successfully raising levels of sport participation in schools and promoting closer links between schools and voluntary sports clubs through school sport partnerships (Phillpots 2013). In 2010, however, the new Secretary of State for Education announced that the Department for Education would no longer provide ring-fenced funding for school sport partnerships, instead providing much lower levels of funding to develop an inter-school ‘Olympics’. Phillpots (2013) and Houlihan and Lindsey (2013), among others, explain

how, despite the success of school sport policy under New Labour, the ideology of the incoming government, focused on shrinking the state through cutting public spending, shifted policy decisively.

In 2015, the new Conservative Government published a cross-government strategy, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*, which offers some clues as to the direction of sport policy over the next few years. It focuses on the way sport and physical activity can contribute to five principal outcomes: physical wellbeing; mental wellbeing; individual development; social and community development; and economic development. As with any national sport policy (and, in fact, any government policy), it is very difficult to predict what effects it will have. One of the most obvious aspects of the new strategy is that it explicitly focuses on sport *and* physical activity, rather than just on sport. This means that there will be a wider focus on (and possible public funding for) activities like cycling (as transport), recreational walking and dancing. One other aspect is that a wider range of organisations may be able to access public funding, if they can argue effectively that they can have an impact on the five principal outcomes the Government is concentrating on. From 2008 onwards, government funding for sport has largely been directed to NGBs; this latest strategy suggests that other organisations, such as charities like StreetGames, will have greater opportunities to access public funding.

These various developments highlight the politicised nature of sport and the ways in which changes in sport policy can directly impact the structure of sport in the UK. For example, a shift in policy emphasis at national government level in late 2007 led to the restructuring of Sport England, one of the key organisations in the sport landscape, and a change in government in 2010 led to the dismantling of a huge number of networks of schools and sports clubs. Often, the effects of sport policy are less pronounced than this and,

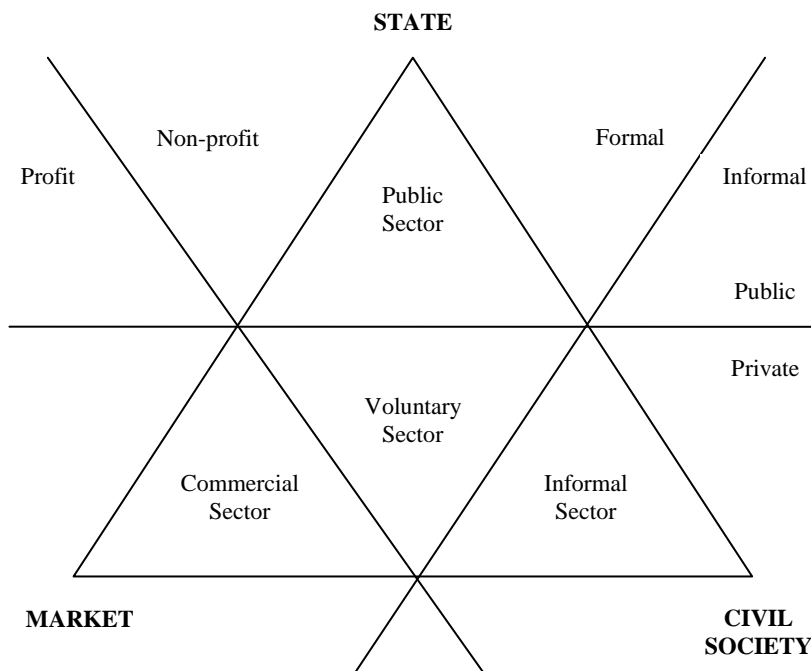
in fact, effects can often run the other way, i.e. the structure of sport can influence the way in which policy is conceived and implemented. This was highlighted earlier in relation to CCPR's policy influence in the mid-twentieth century.

Despite all the changes and policy shifts, however, enduring themes of sport policy remain evident today, such as a concern with sport's intrinsic value and its instrumental benefits, a tension between mass participation and elite success and the notion of sport and recreation as welfare. The next section takes a step back from specific sport policy developments to look at some of the theoretical frameworks through which policy, in general, and sport policy, in particular, can be analysed.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR ANALYSING SPORT POLICY**

### **The role of the State**

One way to analyse sport policy and the structure of sport is to examine the broad role of the State. In doing so, it is traditional to distinguish between the State, the market and civil society, although these 'social orders' are often interdependent. Hoye *et al.* (2006) define them as follows. The State refers to the structures that govern and rule societies. The market refers broadly to business activity, the home of the private sector. Civil society comprises a web of informal, non-market relationships based around households and communities. Hoye *et al.* show how the intersections of these three social orders create four different sectors: the public sector; the commercial sector; the informal sector; and the voluntary sector. These are illustrated in Figure 4.1.



■ **Figure 4.1** A sector model of society. Adapted from Hoye et al. (2006) and Ibsen and Jorgensen (2002)

This model provides a framework through which to examine sport policy and the structure of sport. Looking back at the developments within sport policy in the UK outlined in the first section of the chapter, historically sport took place mainly in the informal and voluntary sectors. Indeed, Houlihan (1997) considers that one of the defining features of British sport is the extensive network of national governing bodies and their influential role, certainly in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. From the 1960s onwards, when government became more directly involved in sport, through investment via local authorities and the Sports Councils, the public sector became increasingly influential. Likewise, in the last 30 years or so, the commercial sector has become increasingly important. Of course, there have long been professional sports organisations, but the increasing commercialisation of sport, fuelled by pay television, has amplified their role.

Also, after the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering in the 1980s, private contractors began to manage sports facilities previously managed within the public sector. Moreover, many large commercial organisations have become increasingly involved in sport through sponsorship of professional sports teams and major sporting events.

Within this framework, several authors have identified key reasons for the State to intervene in how sport is managed. Hoye *et al.* (2006), for example, suggest the following rationale. First, to correct market failure. As discussed, sport is presumed to have a range of social benefits. However, private organisations managing and delivering sport may be unwilling to invest in such social benefits due to a lack of profit incentive. Consequently, the State may opt to intervene in order to fund the gaps in market provision, for example through facility building. Second, because sport, or certain of its aspects, is sometimes seen as a public good, that is, something that once produced can be consumed by additional consumers at no extra cost (Samuelson 1954). Private investors often underproduce such goods, again because of the lack of profit incentive, so again the State may step in. Third, to ensure equity. Where sport is considered widely beneficial, perhaps by improving people's physical health, and where access to it is inequitable, for example because of low income or lack of facilities, the State may interject to address these issues. Finally, the State may intervene in order to regulate or control certain sports or associated activities. For example, following the Hillsborough Stadium disaster, which claimed the lives of 96 Liverpool supporters attending a FA Cup Semi-Final at the home ground of Sheffield Wednesday in 1989, the Government acted to ensure safety in stadia through the Football Spectators Act 1989, which created the Football Licensing Authority and, in turn, established stadium seating requirements.

Other authors have also addressed the question of why governments become involved in sport. Through a comparative analysis of sport policy in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Ireland and the United States, Houlihan (1997) identifies seven main themes that



characterise government involvement, some of which overlap with those described above. They are: the control of sports and pastimes of the community; the health benefits of sport and recreation; the use of sport for social integration; sport's role in military preparedness; sport and international prestige; sport as a diplomatic resource; and sport's use in economic development. It is appropriate to highlight one of those themes – the presumed health benefits of sport and recreation, as it appears common to all of the cases. In the nineteenth century, the presumed health benefits of sport and recreation provided the rationale for constructing swimming pools and parks in the UK, identified in the first section of the chapter as one of the first examples of sport-related national government policy. In February 2009, more than 150 years later, the Department of Health published *Be Active, Be Healthy*, a strategy for getting more people involved in physical activity in order to 'benefit individuals and communities, as well as delivering overall cost savings' (Department of Health 2009: 5). The strategy also set out how the Government will support the Physical Activity Alliance, a sector-led umbrella body comprised of leading physical activity-promoting organisations from the voluntary and private sectors.

This illustrates two important issues. First, there are broad continuities in some of the rationales for government involvement in sport. Second, sport policy and the organisations that manage and deliver sport are now situated across a range of interconnected sectors. Looking back at Figure 4.1, it can be seen that this national-level strategy, *Be Active, Be Healthy*, involves the State, the market and civil society. It will be delivered through the public sector, the commercial sector, the voluntary sector and the informal sector. When analysing sport policy and the role of the State, therefore, it is necessary to consider how each of these different areas – and the motivations driving the organisations within them – relate to one another.

## **Ideologies**

Another means of analysing sport policy is to look at the political ideologies that underpin different government approaches to sport. Bramham (2001: 9) describes political ideologies as ‘reflections of the world and reflections on the world. They offer a prescription of how the world ought to be and subsequently a guide or mandate for political parties and action.’ He then goes on to discuss three broadly defined ideologies: conservatism; liberalism; and social reformism. Conservatism is based on key values of tradition, allegiance and authority, along with an affinity for pragmatism (Scruton 1980). Liberalism stresses a clear divide between public and private spheres and emphasises the efficiency of market forces and consumer choice. Social reformism is underpinned by a belief that substantial government intervention is necessary to address market failure and the inequality and other negative externalities it produces. Linked to this is the key value of altruism (Titmuss 1963). Hoye *et al.* (2006) develop their analysis along similar lines, including socialism as a fourth, separate ideology, which stresses the strong role of the State and centrally controlled resource allocation.

Inevitably, seeking to describe such broad political ideologies involves a great deal of simplification. Nevertheless, examining the implications of these differing ideologies for sport policy can be a useful exercise, one that has been undertaken by a number of authors, including Bramham and Henry (1991), Henry (1993) and Hoye *et al.* (2006). For example, Hoye *et al.* (2006) argue that social reformists tend to see sport as a tool for social development and aim to make sport accessible to the whole community. It is possible to discern elements of this in the sport policy of the UK Labour Government in the 1970s, which sought to promote sporting opportunities as part of the expanding welfare state. More penetrating analyses in this vein can illuminate key aspects of government ideology and how they underpin the direction of sport policy.

## **Policy analytic frameworks**

The theoretical perspectives examined so far are broad and provide a generalised means of looking at developments in sport policy. However, in order to examine sport policy closely, it is necessary to incorporate more detailed theoretical concepts and frameworks developed within the policy analysis literature. Moreover, in order to understand the fine detail of policy decision-making, implementation and so on, it is important to employ theoretical frameworks at the meso-level, that is, the level of national organisations, rather than at the macro, societal level. In a seminal contribution, Houlihan (2005) assesses the value of four such theoretical frameworks – the stages model, institutional analysis, multiple streams and the advocacy coalition framework – and discusses their implications for analysing sport policy.

Several important criteria have been identified against which any theoretical framework for policy analysis needs to be judged (Houlihan 2005: 167–8). First, it should be able to explain both policy stability and change. Second, it should have the capacity to illuminate a range of aspects of the policy process, rather than concentrating on discrete aspects, such as agenda setting or policy impact. Third, it should apply across a range of policy areas. Finally, it should facilitate a medium-term historical analysis of policy – at least five years – to avoid a snapshot approach.

The stages model, previously dominant in policy analysis, divides the policy process into a series of discrete stages. For example, Hogwood and Gunn (1984) identify a nine-stage process, running from ‘agenda setting’ through to ‘policy maintenance, succession or termination’. Many critics, however, have pointed out the weaknesses of such a model. Considering the criteria outlined above, the stages model struggles to explain policy change, due to its assumptions of linearity and rationality, and while it can illuminate many aspects of

the policy process, it assumes neat, sequential relationships between discrete stages. It has been applied across a range of policy areas, yet, as Houlihan (2005) points out, it is subject to the same strong criticisms in each. Finally, the model tends to capture particular moments in the policy process, rather than allow examination of dynamic patterns of influence and outcomes over a sustained period (Houlihan 2005).

Institutional analysis can refer both to the role of particular institutions – agencies, departments, etc. – and to shared values and beliefs. Such a perspective can be particularly useful for sport policy analysis as a number of authors (e.g. Green 2004; Henry 1993; Houlihan and White 2002) discuss the importance of a range of institutions in shaping sport policy in the UK. However, as Houlihan (2005: 170) points out, institutionalism is more of an ‘analytic orientation’ than a specified theoretical framework. Besides, it is weak in explaining change and illuminating a range of aspects of the policy process, as it tends to focus somewhat statically on structures. The multiple streams framework is primarily concerned with agenda setting and disputes the sequential, rationalistic assumptions of previous theoretical frameworks, such as the stages model. Kingdon (1984) identifies three streams – problem, policy and political – which may combine together, through a contingent, even contradictory, process, to enable an issue to get onto the policy agenda. Houlihan (2005) argues that such a framework offers only a partial analysis of stability and change and, also, fails to illuminate a range of policy areas, restricting its focus largely to agenda setting.

The advocacy coalition framework focuses on policy sub-systems, the various coalitions within them and the beliefs that permeate these coalitions. It also incorporates the concept of a ‘policy broker’, who often mediates between coalitions. Houlihan (2005) argues that this framework broadly meets the criteria outlined above, although its explanation of change is somewhat weak and it perhaps does not take sufficient account of power. He proposes for the analysis of sport policy a modified version of the advocacy coalition framework, which is

sensitive to beliefs and values and recognises a number of levels, where each level is partially autonomous, but embedded within a deeper level. For example, it is possible to examine the level of administrative arrangements in relation to sport policy. As described in the first section of the chapter, initially sport in the UK was managed and delivered by national governing bodies, then local authorities became increasingly involved through the management of sports facilities. More recently, the sports councils have played an increasingly important role, as have private organisations, so this level has become increasingly complex. Houlihan describes how the modified advocacy coalition framework allows an analyst to examine the effect of this level on sport policy through the tendency of such administrative units to develop relatively stable preferences for policy tools, perceptions of problems and modes of working.

## **THE CURRENT STRUCTURE OF SPORT IN THE UK**

Fluctuating government interest and investment in sport has resulted in various upheavals in sports management structures over the years. While the bodies ultimately responsible for funding and delivering sport, i.e. the sports councils, NGBs, voluntary sports clubs, schools and local authorities, have not changed substantially, those under government control have seen their strategic direction and the ways in which they operate change frequently. The devolution of sports policy responsibility to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is just one example of such change (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). Houlihan and Green (2009) also provide a detailed description of the way in which New Labour's modernisation agenda has affected the structures and priorities of Sport England, UK Sport and NGBs. Other non-governmental bodies have some protection from such changes, but are frequently dependent on funding tied to government objectives.

Despite these various changes, however, since 2007, there has been a relatively stable structure for funding and delivering sport. Table 4.1 sets out the key organisations that together constitute the structure of sport in the UK.

■ **Table 4.1** *Key organisations in the structure of sport in the UK*

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Scope</i>
Government	The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) sets sports policy for England, and the devolved administrations set policy for sport in each of their countries. Other departments, such as (in England) the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, set the broader policy context within which sport takes place (e.g., by determining the funding received by local authorities, setting the parameters around access to land and water).	Governmental	Home nation
UK Sport	Accountable to DCMS. Invests Exchequer and National Lottery income into Olympic and Paralympic sport, distributing funding to a range of NGBs to implement their Olympic and	Non-departmental	UK public body

Paralympic plans.

Home country sports council	Each of the UK's four nations has its own sports council charged with delivering its government sports policy outside of elite sport (and in the case of England, outside school sport). These are:  Sport England  Sport Northern Ireland sportscotland  Sports Council for Wales  These bodies also distribute government and lottery funding to sport, supporting capital build and development programmes.	Non-departmental public body	Home nation
Youth Sport Trust	The Youth Sport Trust was established to improve young people's sporting opportunities. Previously managed Government investment in school sport through the PE and Sport Strategy for Young People; now has a reduced role.	Charity	UK

National governing bodies of sport	Responsible for setting the rules and competition frameworks for individual sports. Most require clubs or individuals to affiliate in order to compete. Many have programmes to grow participation and improve performance in their sport, and receive funding from the sports councils to do so.	Various legal forms	Varying geographical coverage, e.g. home country, Great Britain or UK
Sport and Recreation Alliance (formerly CCPR)	The representative body for the national governing bodies of sport and recreation. It has no direct delivery responsibilities, but ensures the voice of sport is heard in government, and assists its members to meet their responsibilities.	Independent organisation	UK
British Olympic Association & British Paralympic Association	These independent organisations are responsible for preparing Britain's Olympic and Paralympic teams respectively. This includes event logistics and relations with the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees. The 'Commonwealth Games Council' in each home country prepares teams for each Commonwealth Games.	Independent not-for-profit organisation	Great Britain



Local authorities	Responsible for key services in their geographical area. As such, they are a significant investor in sport and recreation.	Local government	Borough, district, county
Management contractors	The majority of local authority sports facilities are now managed by specialist management organisations. These include large-scale private companies which operate facilities throughout the country, and also charitable trusts, established by individual authorities to manage their facilities.	Independent firms and trusts	Varied
County sports partnerships	These partnerships are responsible for bringing together local authorities and sports bodies in local areas to drive up sporting participation. They receive core funding from Sport England.	Range of legal forms	English county
Professional bodies	A number of professional bodies support the individuals working in sport and recreation. These include the Institute of Sport, Parks and Leisure and the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management. The standards for sporting qualifications are set by SkillsActive.	Range of legal forms	UK

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## CASE STUDY 2: THE 'CODIFICATION' OF GOVERNANCE

Governance has become an increasingly important issue in UK sport policy over the last two decades and the particular ways in which it has become 'codified' demonstrate issues around ideology and structure. In the early 2000s, reacting to certain high profile failures within NGBs, such as the collapse of the British Athletics Federation in 1999, and seeking to show that increasing levels of public funding were being managed and spent appropriately, the UK government pushed for a stronger focus on governance within NGBs. This was part of a broader programme of modernisation reforms that introduced, or at least intensified, an 'audit culture' within sport.

In 2004, UK Sport, along with the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators, published *Good Governance: A Guide for National Governing Bodies of Sport* (UK Sport, 2004). It set out a number of principles of good governance, but also declared that 'No two governing bodies are exactly alike, therefore one size cannot possibly fit them all' (UK Sport, 2004: 1). In 2011, the Sport and Recreation Alliance, in consultation with a range of sport organisations, published the *Voluntary Code of Good Governance for the Sport and Recreation Sector* (re-issued in 2014) (Sport and Recreation Alliance 2011, 2014). This contained seven principles of good governance, with practical considerations to support their implementation. In 2012, Sport England published their governance strategy, *On Board for Better Governance* (Sport England, 2012), setting out six key governance criteria. Most recently, in response to the new government sport strategy, *Sporting Future*, UK Sport and Sport England published a joint governance code, *A Code for Sports Governance* (UK Sport/Sport England, 2016). This notes that, unlike previous governance codes, this is 'a

mandatory set of Requirements for those organisations seeking public funding, as required by the Government in its 2015 strategy *Sporting Future*'.

This 'codification' of governance highlights several issues. First, it has been closely bound up with broader processes of modernisation, initiated by Conservative governments in the 1980s, but continued under New Labour and subsequent Conservative-led Coalition and Conservative governments. This demonstrates how a strong ideology, such as neo-liberalism, can lead to the persistence of certain policy agendas across periods of government led by different political parties. Second, the creation of multiple codes by different sport organisations can be seen as a means of those organisations seeking legitimacy within their particular regulatory field. Of course, there are more immediate rationales for the development of such codes, i.e. simply seeking to improve the governance of NGBs and other sport organisations. However, it is possible to see Sport England's development of its 'own' governance strategy in 2012 as a way of asserting authority in the field of governance and protecting its own government funding by legitimising its role in this area. Furthermore, the development of the *Voluntary Code* by the Sport and Recreation Alliance can be seen as a way for NGBs (and the sector as a whole) to demonstrate its own capacity for self-governance, i.e. a way for NGBs to assert a degree of independence from Government.

The culmination of this process, however, i.e. a central government sport strategy setting out a requirement for the sports councils to agree a new combined code with mandatory requirements for NGBs to meet if they are to receive public funding, lays bare the power relationships within the UK sport structures. As and when central government is willing and able, it can exert power and influence to push through certain sport policies and take ownership of the regulatory space.

## **SUMMARY**

This chapter has outlined how the current sporting landscape in the UK has evolved through the combined efforts of independent, sport-focused associations and the interest and investment of government, sometimes for the sake of sport itself, but more often in pursuit of specific social outcomes. Furthermore, sport has also been shaped by broader political agendas, such as the desire to introduce competition in public services. This pattern will no doubt continue in years to come, but there does now seem to be a growing understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the funding, development and delivery agents of sports, and an emerging consensus of the value of sport in its own right, alongside its potential to contribute to wider social agendas.

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## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- 1 How would you characterise government sport policy until 1960?
- 2 Describe various theoretical frameworks that can be used to analyse sport policy.
- 3 Explain the importance of the sports councils in the UK.
- 4 Critically assess the changing roles of national governing bodies since their emergence in the nineteenth century.

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## **FURTHER READING**

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For specific policy-related documents, see the report of the Wolfenden Committee (1960) *Sport and the community*. Also, more recently, the PAT 10 report, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (1999) *Policy Action Team 10: Report to the Social Exclusion Unit – Arts and Sport*, the joint Department for Culture, Media and Sport/Strategy Unit (2002) *Game Plan* and the most recent government strategy for sport, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2015) are all important.

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## **WEBSITES**

Sport England

[www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

UK Sport

[www.uk sport.gov.uk](http://www.uk sport.gov.uk)

Youth Sport Trust

[www.youthsporttrust.org](http://www.youthsporttrust.org)

For up-to-date knowledge on policy developments affecting sport, visit the Sport and Recreation Alliance website ([www.sportandrecreation.org.uk](http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk)). This also has links to the websites of over 300 governing and representative bodies of sport and recreation that are members of the Sport and Recreation Alliance.

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