

Developing a strategy and techniques for the evaluation of the impact of anti-doping education programmes

Project Summary

All public and publicly funded organisations not only need to be able to specify clear objectives, but are also expected, by their various stakeholders, to be able to demonstrate progress in relation to organisational objectives. For many of the more straightforward public policy goals valid and reliable quantitative measures are relatively easy to identify and apply. However, for organisations addressing more complex social problems which involve effecting behavioural change the challenge of evaluation is much greater. It has been estimated that approximately £300m is spent annually tackling the problem of doping in sport. How do governments and sports organisations know that they are receiving value for money and how do the various anti-doping organisations know that they are having an impact on the problem?

It is these and related questions that this project addresses. The project is undertaken in the knowledge that for a social phenomenon as complex, persistent and secretive as doping there will be no simple formula for measuring value for money or impact of particular anti-doping strategies such as education programmes let alone a formula for identifying a clear causal relationship between a particular programme and observed behavioural change. However, the absence of robust and easily collected data regarding impact should not result in an abandonment of attempts at programme evaluation. The failure to take on the challenge of anti-doping policy evaluation allows the critics of the policy to argue that the absence of evidence equates to the absence of impact. With these caveats in mind the aims of this project are to:

- Identify and examine strategies and techniques for assessing the impact of anti-doping policy in general, but education policies and programmes in particular
- Prepare a set of guidelines, in the form of a handbook, which will enable anti-doping organisations (including NADOs, international federations and domestic sports organisations) to evaluate, as effectively as possible, the impact of their education policy and associated programmes

The first aim would be fulfilled primarily through a desk study designed to identify strategies and techniques:

- currently used to evaluate anti-doping programmes
- used in similarly complex policy areas, and
- discussed in the academic literature, potentially applicable to anti-doping, but not tested

Strategies and techniques would be assessed according to a range of criteria including: relevance to anti-doping programmes at the individual and organisational levels, ease of implementation (resource requirements and degree of complexity), validity, reliability, cost, cultural sensitivity, and value as formative and/or summative evaluation.

The second aim has two elements, the first of which is to provide anti-doping organisations with an evaluation handbook/'tool kit' which would include advice on what data to collect, how and when to collect them, and how to turn the data into management information (for the purposes of programme improvement and also to enable accountability).

The 'tool kit' would be designed, as far as is possible, with the wide range of potential users in mind (differences in terms of resources, expertise and culture) and would be progressive insofar as it would enable basic, intermediate and advanced evaluation.

The second element overlaps closely with the first and would be to design the tool kit in such a way that WADA could use it to collect data which would provide a comparison of anti-doping education programmes and, if repeated, provide a source of longitudinal data on the development of education in anti-doping.