



Panathlon Pandemic Response An Impact Review

August 2021



Executive Summary

Despite the pandemic disproportionately affecting its participants and physical events cancelled, Panathlon has had a significant impact on its participants, their schools and teachers and on young leaders this academic year. More than that, its rapid and flexible response has meant that regional partners were able to roll out provision quickly. Through this, Panathlon have been able to engage a further 108 new schools.

Reports, feedback and survey analysis from schools and teachers involved in the virtual Panathlon programme tell a story of a successful pivot from large scale events to Panathlon's Pandemic Programme of activities for students at home and at school. This impact review seeks to assess the difference this pandemic response has made - to those taking part, to schools and to regions.

- Panathlon is praised for its leadership, flexibility, guidance and support offered during the pandemic, with 94% of teachers rating Panathlon's overall pandemic response and adaptation of the programme 'excellent' or 'very good', while 96% reported the same for its communications, support and expertise provided. New resources were developed such as online guidance, teachers' packs and at home challenges, QandAs with parathletes and the Panathlon People podcasts.
- This response has extended Panathlon's reach. In its first impact report in 2019, there was evidence of greater provision in school (alongside external events) engaging, on average, a further three children for every two attending events. Now the in-school provision has ballooned, so too has the children able to take part in Panathlon; and the capability of teachers and schools to extend their provision still further. Our findings show that this ripple effect has changed school and regional delivery models. And **79%** of teachers believe they've been able to engage **more** children than usual. Overall, this year Panathlon has reached:



- It is not just numbers that has increased, Panathlon has made a clear difference to those involved, and delivered against all its sought outcomes this academic year (identified in its Theory of Change developed in advance of the Pandemic).

COMPETITORS

Improved Physical Wellbeing 
Improved Self-Esteem, Confidence and Skills 
Raised Aspirations 
Inclusion 

SCHOOLS

Greater Provision of Sports 
Improving the PE Curriculum in Schools 
Supporting and Enabling Teachers 

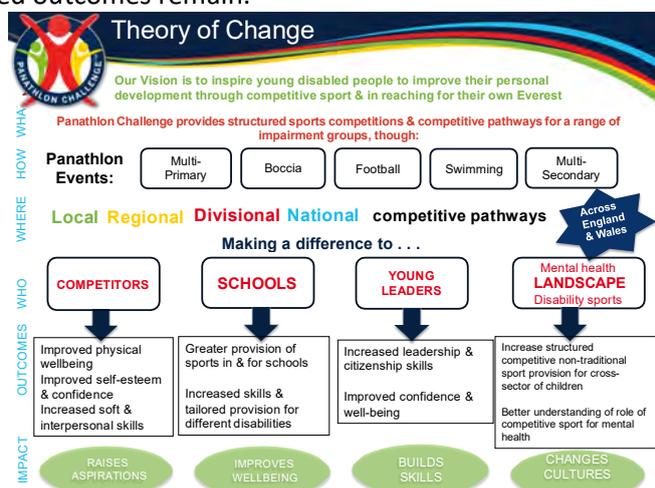
YOUNG LEADERS

Leadership Opportunities 
Improved Self-Esteem, Confidence and Skills 
Raised Aspirations 

Overall, teachers report that the Panathlon has delivered fun, brought children together and inspired and supported activity in school. As a result, schools, teachers and children have been better equipped to respond positively to the challenging environment.

Impact Assessment & Research Approach

Working with Panathlon in 2019, Bean Research developed a systemic approach to assessing and reporting the difference it makes. This included creating a Theory of Change, as well as developing and reporting on an Impact Evaluation Framework. This structure ensures consistency of purpose and in measuring outcomes, particularly in years such as 2020/21 where the usual programme has been derailed, but the desired outcomes remain.

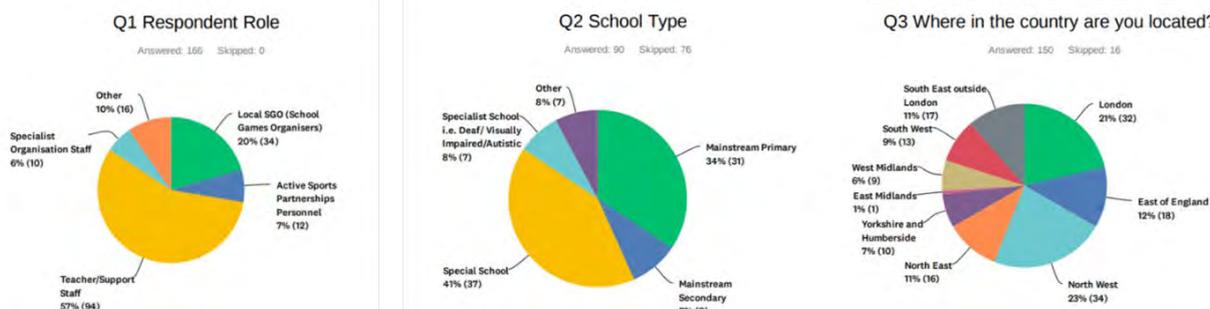


Considering this exceptional year, the evaluation process, objectives and timing have been altered, to specifically report on the past academic year’s success, in the context of the pandemic. Bean Research have been tasked to report any difference Panathlon has been able to make with its virtual format, but also to examine the impact relative to previous years, highlighting differences and learning to take forward from the challenges of the year.

This year, the Impact Review includes:

- Independent desk-based analysis of the year’s case studies, feedback and stories (including podcasts)
- Analysis of reach: the numbers of participants
- Analysis of an online quantitative survey among participating primary, secondary schools in June and July 2021, conducted by Bean Research. (166 teachers and staff responded)

The charts below indicate the respondent profile. A large proportion of the respondents are teachers or support staff (57%) and 20% are School Games Organisers. About half the respondents represent Special (41%) and Specialist (8%) Schools, while the other half are from mainstream Primary (34%) and Secondary schools. There is a spread of responses from across the UK, with some focus on the North West, London and East of England, which together make up over half the responses.



Based on the above Theory of Change, the following report details the difference made to Competitors, Schools, Young Leaders and the Inclusion Landscape.

The Context

The importance of programmes like Panathlon over the past year is irrefutable. Covid-19 has had a dramatic impact on both the physical activity of children and the lives of disabled people. As a charity working in both these environments, where most interactions are based on large live events and in-person physical activity, the challenges for Panathlon have been numerous and the importance of overcoming them, significant longer term for both the organisation and the young people involved.

“We know the pandemic has had a huge impact on children and young people’s engagement in sport and physical activity. The pandemic has impacted us all in some way, but the ‘Sport in our Communities’ report reminds us that it has not impacted everyone equally. We owe it to the groups most affected to do all we can to get sport and physical activity up and running in all its forms.”

Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive, Sport England¹

The Activity Alliance’s Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2020-21, shows that disabled people’s lives have been the hardest hit by COVID-19 and that the pandemic has had a dramatic impact on disabled people’s activity levels. Disabled people also account for two-thirds of the deaths from coronavirus. The results of the survey show how the pandemic is not only widening existing inequalities for disabled people but creating new ones too.

Key findings of the Activity Alliance Survey include:

- Disabled people felt that they do not have the opportunity to be as active as they want to, compared to non-disabled people (29% vs 44%).
- Almost a quarter stated that they had not received enough information about how to be active during the pandemic (23% vs 13%).
- The lack of activity has led to both their physical and mental health being harder to manage.
- A fear of contracting the virus, the impact on their health, a lack of space and support to be able to exercise safely at home, have become significant barriers for disabled people.

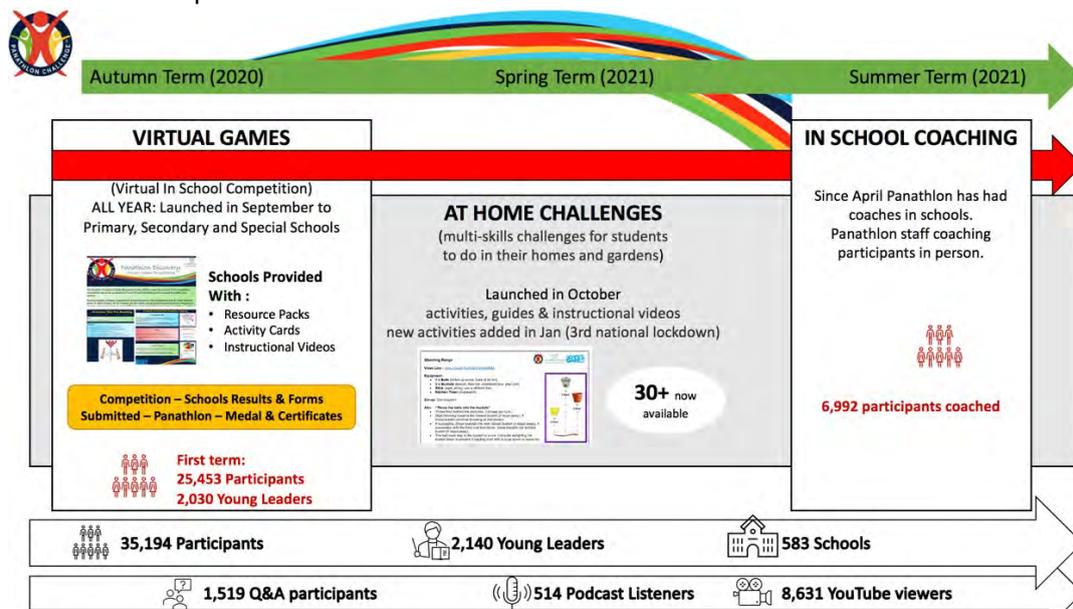
For the children engaged with Panathlon, the virtual and in-school activity helped address this, offering the opportunity to be active and competitive. It is clear that Panathlon is seen by teachers as addressing the gaps identified by Activity Alliance, summarised below:

ACTIVITY ALLIANCE REPORTED CONTEXT	PANATHLON'S RESPONSE
Developing physical literacy key in positive relationship with physical activity	87% believe Panathlon has enabled an enjoyment of sport. Longer-term case studies show how this instils sustained activity.
44% say not given opportunities to be as active as they want to be	583 schools & 45,845 children provided opportunities. 77% of teachers report that Panathlon enabled sports to remain in children's lives in the pandemic.
Not received enough information about how to be active	92% feel Panathlon has showed leadership & flexibility at a difficult time. Summer, Winter & At Home resources & training provided.
Lack of activity has made physical & mental health harder to manage	93% feel Panathlon helped young peoples' mental health. 71% believe activities increased resilience & 65% report increased interpersonal skills.
Lack of support & space has increased barriers to sport	30 activity packs provided for Panathlon At Home. Half feel people more aware of how to adapt equipment & space to remain active.
People with disabilities have become more isolated during the Pandemic.	Half feel Panathlon reduced young people's isolation. 77% feel Panathlon increased their sense of belonging.

¹ Sport England <https://www.sportengland.org/news/chief-executive-reacts-government-report-sport-our-communities> was replying to the Government’s report [The ‘Sport in our communities’ inquiry looked at the impact of the coronavirus \(Covid-19\) pandemic on people’s individual activity levels](#)

Panathlon Pandemic Delivery

This report covers the academic year September 2020 to July 2021. Although activities ceased due to the pandemic restrictions in April 2020, Panathlon started working closely with teachers and regional sports partnership officials to develop a suite of resources appropriate for use in school and at home, to accommodate the requirements for combinations of live, remote, in person or virtual activities and to give schools a choice of adaptable activities, to encourage SEND children into physical activity, regardless of the limitations of the pandemic. This was launched at Brookfields Specialist SEN School in Reading in September 2020, where competitors were the first to try out the virtual in-school competition format.



“We have given schools the opportunity to choose from a wide range of activities and to implement it in a way that suits them. The options are so plentiful and flexible that they can be easily adapted to suit ever-changing coronavirus restrictions. That flexibility has been crucial to getting thousands of SEND students back outside, staying active and enjoying sport and physical activity which is adapted and delivered in ways that many of them have never experienced before.”

Tony Waymouth, Panathlon’s Chief Operating Officer

In just 10 days, its success was obvious. 8,000 competitors had joined Panathlon’s Virtual Programme and by the end of December it had reached 25,453 and 2,030 young leaders. In the third national lockdown in January 2021, Panathlon also launched a series of activities to support teachers delivering sport and PE to classes, at school or at home. Panathlon’s accessible range of multi-skills challenges for pupils with disabilities and special needs could be completed in the classroom or playground, and simultaneously by pupils in their own homes or gardens. Three guides were available for download, tailored for primary, secondary and special-school pupils.

In addition, Panathlon re-launched its multi-skills challenges, creating “At Home Challenges” for students to do in their homes and gardens in order to stay active and engaged during Covid-19 lockdowns and school holidays. The first at-home challenges were released in October 2020 and further activities and instructional videos launched in response to lockdown three. There are now over 30 at-home challenges to take part in.

This rolling rapid response, adapting to new circumstances, learning from what has worked in the past and building new resources has been seen core to its success over the last year:

“It has provided more variety and lots of different options, especially during the times of various Covid restrictions. It has given us new ideas how to adapt outdoor games for indoors and how to use PE resources in a different way. It has given our learners lots of fun and a sense of achievement.”

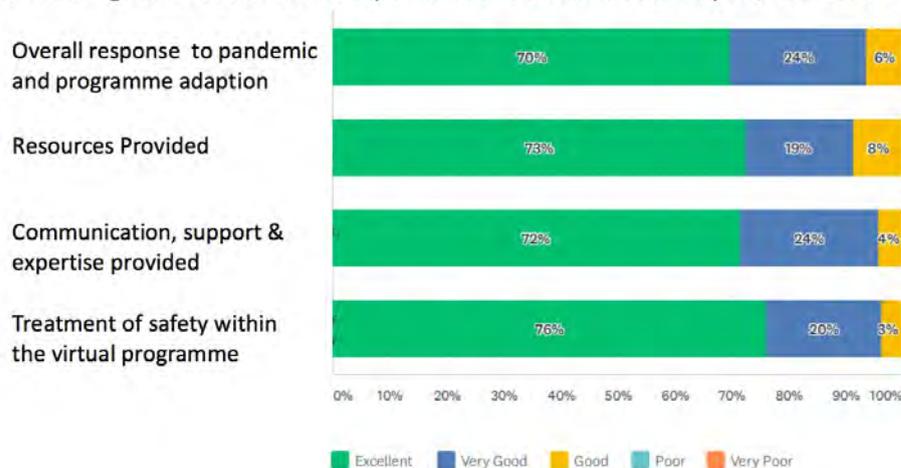
Sarka Viehoff, Heritage House School, Buckinghamshire

Two new products supporting their work and offering inspiration to teachers, parents and children are the Panathlon People podcast, which was launched on 12 March 2021, with 16 podcasts already available. The QandAs were also developed as a way of inspiring young people through role models and sharing experiences and celebrating young people’s success and awards. Overall, 1,519 young people participated.



Teachers and PE staff overwhelmingly feel that Panathlon has responded to pandemic exceptionally well, with 94% rating Panathlon’s overall response and adaptation of the programme as excellent or very good and 96% describing the communications, support and expertise provided in the same way. No-one described the resources, communication, response or virtual safety aspects as ‘poor’.

Q Thinking about Panathlon's response over the last academic year, how would you rate its ...



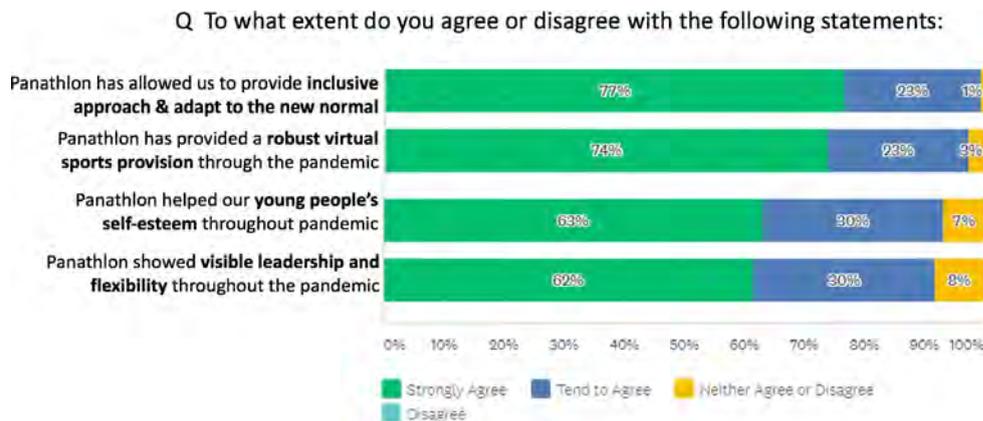
The Winter and Summer School Packs were found to be particularly useful to share and engage children, while – as would be expected – awareness of the Podcasts is lower. However, the more this audience are aware of the resources provided by Panathlon, the more positive they are about its overall offer. With interest in a blended offer in future years, this offers Panathlon a significant opportunity to engage more audiences in its resources and expertise, alongside its competitive events.

“Panathlon are excellent and adapt each day of delivery to meet the specific needs and capacity of their audience. The variety of activities continues to grow... I think the programme is fantastic”

Jo McDonald, Active Sports Partnerships

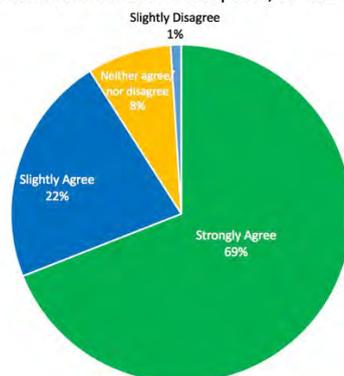
Teachers not only believe that Panathlon has delivered support and leadership to assist schools to navigate the negative impact of Covid-19, but that it has also been successful in delivering the outcomes expected by the usual programme of Panathlon - training teachers, expanding sports provision for SEN students; and by building self-esteem, resilience, a sense of belonging and enjoyment of sport among the young participants.

97% of teachers feel that Panathlon has provided a robust virtual sports provision, while 92% feel it has shown visible leadership and flexibility. 3 in 4 'strongly agree'. 4 in 5 feel it has enabled engagement of more children than usual.



It is also clear that teachers are keen for some of the additional benefits of Panathlon pandemic to continue. In fact, nine in ten teachers would be interested in a 'blended option' next year, with both events and at school activities.

Next year, we would be interested in a blended option, including Q and A's with athletes and virtual packs, as well as events



"(We'd like) Panathlon to continue with the blended approach to supporting schools in house as well as external events. This approach will allow even more children to access Panathlon who wouldn't normally get the chance. Well done to the whole team at Panathlon for your hard work and quick response during challenging times." Faye Haworth (LSGO)

One teacher remarked that in fact the blended approach will enable Panathlon to cope with increased demand:

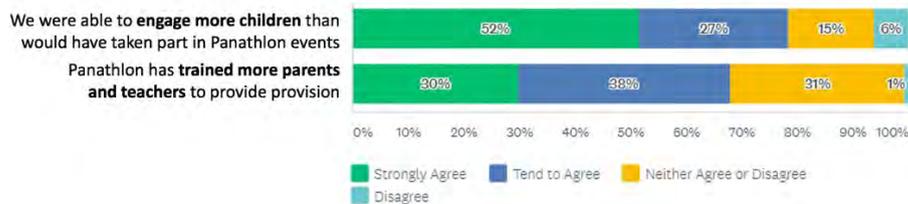
"The idea of a blended approach could be very interesting - now more schools are aware of Panathlon, capacity could become an issue so virtual opportunities and possibly including some School staff CPD so they would be able to sustain activities throughout the year would only strengthen the work being done."

Panathlon Pandemic Reach

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of the success of the Panathlon pandemic programme is in its take up, and extension of reach. Overall, 45,845 participants have been involved this year, with 35,194 participants engaged virtually (and a further 6,992 coached in school by Panathlon staff since restrictions allowed, from April 2021). In addition, 2,140 Young Leaders have been involved – most of these for the first time, with many SEN schools discovering a new leadership opportunity. A further 1,519 children took part in Q&As kids taking part online with coaches, Paralympians etc., while 514 people have listened to Panathlon People Podcasts and 8,631 YouTube views of activities.

The ‘ripple effect’, identified in 2019, has expanded. Panathlon’s impact report in 2019 demonstrated that (on average) a further three children engaged in Panathlon activities for every two attending events. This year, the virtual offer and the engagement of and co-delivery by parents and teachers has enabled more children to engage as a result of Panathlon Pandemic (reported by **79%** of teachers). And demonstrating a longer term opportunity to engage even more children, 68% report training of more teachers and parents to provide inclusive sports provision in-school and in-home, in the future.

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:



“Some primary schools didn’t bring kids with complex needs to events because they don’t have the staff to manage them when they’re off-site. But the virtual programme has allowed more students with complex needs to take part in mainstream settings.”

Jeffrey Hoey, Partnership Development Manager, North Suffolk Sport & Health Partnership

583 schools were involved this year, 108 (19%) for the first time. This wider reach is in part due to Panathlon developing the engagement and enthusiasm of the regional sports partnerships (from Bolton to Suffolk, Tees Valley to West Essex) – see case studies on pages 18-19.

The use of the website reflects the resources on offer, with 26,512 total pageviews since the beginning of January 2021 (4,411 viewing 'At-Home Challenges' and 1,232 Parallel PE pages). There were 1,829 downloads of activity cards and 8,631 YouTube views of 36 videos of activities. This is a huge increase in website engagement, and therefore a greater opportunity for engaging others. This broader reach not only introducing new teachers, schools and children to Panathlon, but has retained the competitive element of Panathlon, identified as so important in its first impact review. In fact, half of teachers say they have been able to offer a competitive experience to children for the first time (compared to 81% in 2019).



Making a Difference to Competitors

“Short-term, it provides beaming smiles, medals around necks and amazing memories. Long-term, the opportunities and confidence it provides really are limitless. It has been absolutely vital on the sporting and leadership journeys of pupils like Tom & Adil.”
 Guy Wilkins, Head of PE, Marjorie McClure School

Despite the core inter-school competitive events, Panathlon has been able to continue to deliver the benefits described above by Guy. In a year lead by virtual activities, the difference made to competitors has been clear, with evidence of improved confidence; continued physical activity; and skills development coming from both individual case studies and survey feedback from schools.

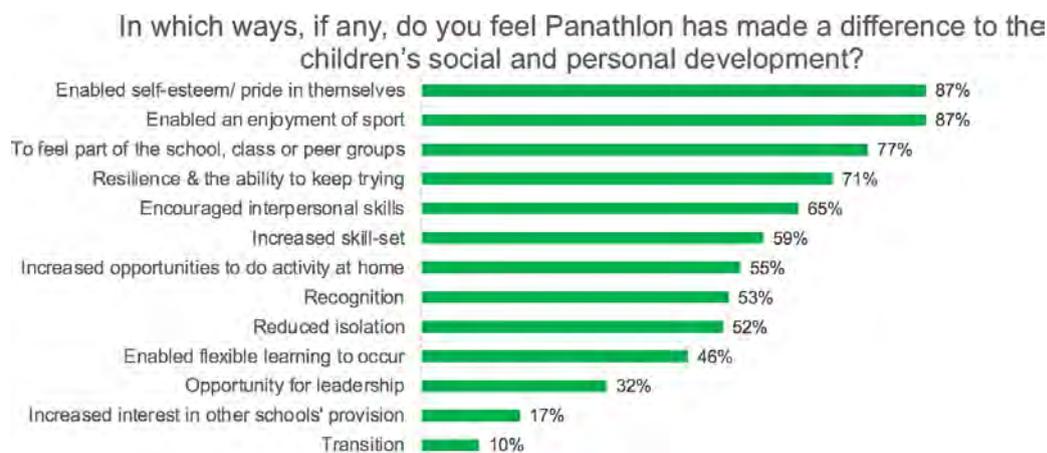
Overall, our analysis demonstrates that the pandemic Panathlon programme has delivered in 4 areas for competitors, each of which is explored in the following pages:



Santha Patel, sums up how the games days at Little Heath School had an impact in each of these areas:

*“The Panathlon Games Days held at Little Heath School were a fantastic success. It was held over two days so all 111 Key Stage 3 and 4 students could have the opportunity to be involved. The students thoroughly enjoyed all the different games and activities there was **something for everyone**. We also **discovered some talented students** in the complex classes who we could take to future competitions. Students loved being **awarded** a special medal for their efforts and left feeling very **proud**. I saw a student still wearing his medal the other day. The event had a **positive impact on their confidence, self-esteem and skill development**. Thank you so much for giving our students such a wonderful experience.”* Santha Patel, Little Heath School

And in our recent survey, teachers are very clear about the impact on participating children’s self-esteem, enjoyment, resilience, sense of belonging and interpersonal skills. Over half feel it reduced the children’s isolation, and 1 in 3 feel it was an opportunity for leadership and help with transition.



Improved Physical Wellbeing: Keeping Active through Lockdown Restrictions

The Virtual Programme's popularity and engagement levels have been so high partly because Panathlon has been able to collaborate with SGOs and schools to tailor activities with a selection of adaptable activities for different needs and abilities. Schools have used Panathlon's framework and activities in various ways, some using them to create a school sports day or after school clubs.

The outcome is that students have been encouraged, supported and motivated to continue to participate in physical activities (at home and at school), at a time in the pandemic when maintaining physical wellbeing has been both challenging and extremely important. More than **3 in 4 teachers** believe that Panathlon has delivered fun opportunities; allowed students to continue to socialise and has continued to create inclusion despite the raft of limitations in bringing people together in the pandemic.

Furthermore, in an environment where the impact of the pandemic is disproportionately affecting the disabled community in terms of physical activity, teachers feel that Panathlon has enabled sport to continue to play an important role in students' lives (**77% agree**) by providing inspiration, training and access to equipment to deliver appropriate activities; continuing to offer first competitive experiences (**51%**); and by building enthusiasm for sports among students (**60%**).



In some ways Panathlon, in the year from September 2020, played an even more critical role in keeping children active than in previous, unrestricted years.

"I've observed other teachers delivering it within their classes and the feedback has been excellent. The kids have missed out so much on proper sporting events and this has been a great replacement for that." Sean Connolly Hill Top School in Gateshead

For particular SEND pupils the virtual nature of Panathlon this year has been a positive, as trips to external competition can be disruptive. Remaining in their school environment for competitions has reduced discomfort for children, making the experience far more inclusive and positive.

Once students returned to school after the second lockdown, Panathlon assisted schools in increasing the amount of physical exercise students were able to engage in.

"It's been a fairly grim time for a lot of our children. There were families with parents working or unable to get their kids out doing any physical exercise. We ramped up the amount of PE we were doing when kids came back in after the second lockdown and Panathlon played a key part in that. Suddenly the children didn't take playtime or physical activity for granted any more. It was a thing of absolute joy for them." Andrea Wylde of Valence Primary School in Dagenham

Improved Self-Esteem, Confidence and Skills

Panathlon continues to build participants' confidence with the Virtual Programme, and the benefits of pre-covid activities have been maintained. In fact, in terms of inclusivity, the school and home base adaptations allowed more students to take part through universal participation rather than selective; and in familiar environments some SEND student have been more comfortable to participate. With structured competition, the students are reaping the benefits of competitive sport, with a sense of achievement, increased skills and confidence. As Andrew Deacon from Ashley school reported, the students "wear the Panathlon medals with such pride in their own achievements".

The virtual programme has given real flexibility in meeting the needs of students. At Ryvers School in Slough, Berkshire, pupils have adapted the summer games and multi-skills activities in PE lessons with SEND students and those from the school's autism base.

"It has helped our students gain so much confidence in PE and sport"

PE Lead, Katie Taylor, Ryvers.

Case Study: Jack continues to engage with Panathlon through At Home Challenges

Jack in Year 11, at Park Community Academy, took part in many of Panathlon's At-Home Challenges and loved the opportunity, benefiting from the programme in a variety of ways. He remained active, got time outside and tested his abilities. As a usual participant of the competitive events, Jack was able to continue to benefit, and in fact practiced even more, despite the virtual delivery of the Panathlon Programme.



"I usually go to a lot of competitions with school, and we have stopped doing them now, so it was good still being able to enter stuff. It also made me try a bit harder and I practiced for longer. They were easy to follow especially when there was a video with it to explain it. The activities as part of the Panathlon competitions made me try harder and were good fun."

Jack, Year 11

Raising Aspirations

As an additional positive outcome through lockdown, Panathlon's ambassadors, GB Para Athletes have inspired participation in sports, by meeting children with disabilities and special needs via Zoom and encouraging them to pursue their sporting ambitions. Parathletes like Nathan Maguire, Freya Levy, Jodie Ounsley, Esah Hayat and James Dixon have connected with Panathlon students across the country, telling their stories and engaging with Q & A sessions.

Nathan Maguire, the GB Paralympic wheelchair racer, has held regular Q&As with schools who are engaged in Panathlon's virtual programme.

"I wish I had the opportunity to do Panathlon. The younger we start children with disabilities doing sport the better they will be. It would have enabled me to show that I do have value in a team and would have helped me in everyday life at school." Nathan Maguire, GB Paralympic wheelchair racer

"I found this experience very inspiring because he told us that anything is possible and that his disability is the best thing that ever happened to him. This makes it even more inspiring because he has achieved so much, and it will give lots of people motivation no matter whether they have a disability or not!" Faith, Year 8 at South Wirral High School

Along with many others, Headteacher, Emma Monaghan sang the praises of Panathlon in her podcast interview with Dom Fenton. She talked about how her school looks for opportunities for children to shine, and that school leaders see Panathlon an important part of enabling this through sports. One of the lockdown highlights for her school was the opportunity to speak to Nathan Macquire over Zoom. Staff and pupils found him to be exceptionally inspirational, leaving children buzzing and excited to be able to see, meet and talk to a role model like that on screen, learning that children like them can be represented in lots of different ways.

“Panathlon has shown the children that they have a space in society”
Emma Monaghan, Headteacher, Gillas Lane School

The ability to continue to connect with disabled athletes remotely, during the pandemic has given children role models that are relevant and aspirational. For example, Esah Hayat, 3 times men’s singles champion at the National Deaf Tennis Championships was an inspiring speaker, had a great impact on teachers, students and parents during zoom call and Q&A.

“The session with Esah was brilliant, he such an inspiring young man and a great role model.”
Mina Kaur, Teacher of the Deaf at Hurworth Primary School in Darlington

“How brilliant to hear all about what Esah has achieved! It makes me happy to see that as a hearing-impaired young man, you can still do so many things! It made me tearful when listening to Esah. It’s wonderful to hear his passion.” Parent, Hurworth Primary.

Inclusion

Although the Virtual Programme only takes place within individual schools, pupils benefitted from a similar feeling of inclusion and fulfilment that they got from competing in external competitive events. **77%** of teachers believe that children now feel more part of the school or group as a result of their involvement in Panathlon.

“Some of our children had never had the opportunity to compete in a sporting event before. They were delighted just to feel like they could take part, but to receive the Panathlon medals as well, they were absolutely over the moon! Without Panathlon, they would have missed out on that opportunity to taste competition. It’s been their chance to shine, and they have absolutely embraced it.”
Rachael Hall, Sports Coach, Lewis Street Primary Salford

“They do get that togetherness from it, even though we’re physically not there alongside other schools. We feel like we’re part of something.”
Mr Johnson, Park Community Academy

“It’s boosted the competitive spirit in the school and encouraged our pupils to really ‘have a go’, which is exactly what I’m trying to achieve. Using your Panathlon model has really helped build our own framework for how best to engage the pupils in competitive sport across the board.”
Michelle Cook, PE Lead, Dee Banks School in Chester.

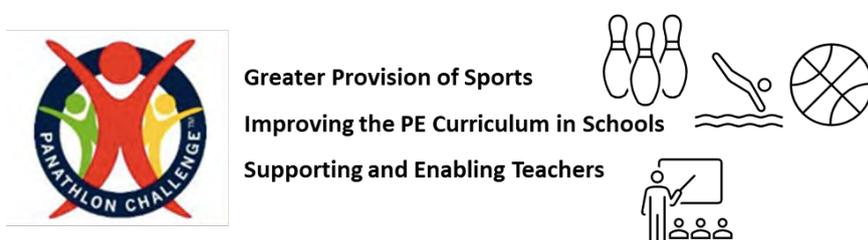
Making a Difference to Schools

In previous impact analysis, Panathlon was shown to have made a difference to schools' provision, access to new equipment and ability for teachers to deliver directly. This has increased further through the Pandemic, despite a dramatic change to how Panathlon could interact with schools and children.

“When the Panathlon virtual programme hit, it was an absolute godsend. We obviously couldn't go into schools and their PE staff weren't able to deliver across the schools and it was bubble staff that were in charge. Once the virtual programmes landed with all the videos and support, teachers that weren't used to delivering physical activity and sport were snapping our hand off. What it is has done is make sure all the children in the whole school are getting these activities – it's like handing teachers a physical activity curriculum that is easy for them to deliver. It will definitely continue.”

Val French, **North Yorkshire** Inclusive Sport Partnership

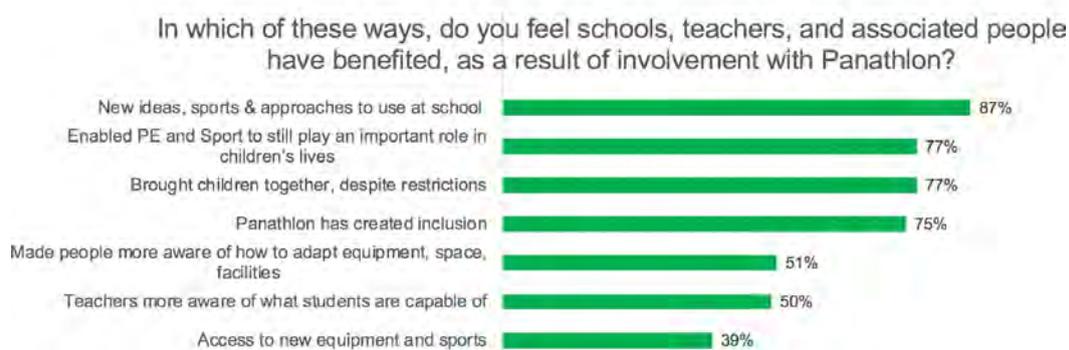
The themes emerging from the impact analysis, show that schools have benefitted in three ways:



Supporting and Enabling Teachers

The Virtual Programme has given a huge boost to teachers. Teachers report that Panathlon has provided structured, easy to use resources that meet their needs; built confidence in teaching PE; developed skill sets; and provided CPD opportunities.

In particular, 87% agree that Panathlon has inspired new ideas, sports and approaches for schools, this positive response - significantly higher than 2019 (when 72% of teachers agreed), demonstrating the role Panathlon has played in inspiring creative solutions to maintaining and increasing provision of sports.



68% feel that more teachers and parents have been trained to provide provision. Half are now more aware of what their children are capable of, and therefore greater opportunities available. Given the known pressures and limitations on teacher time in the past year, this is a real achievement.

“The programme means teachers can see that it’s easy to teach PE. It’s all there on the Virtual Panathlon YouTube videos and session plans. There’s such a smooth movement through the activities and there’s adaptations throughout. It also meets all their targets in a fun, engaging way.”

David Ball, Movement Coordinator,
Kingsdown School

“All the teachers commented on how easy it made it for them to lead sessions. It gave them so much more confidence in delivering a good quality session for the children because the content was brilliant. It has been completely accessible, achievable and enjoyable for all.”

Rachael Hall, Lewis Street Primary

This support, of course, has in turn led to improved provision and curriculums.

Greater Provision of Sports & Improving the PE Curriculum in Schools

Panathlon has enabled schools to give students the sporting opportunities they need during the pandemic.

“Virtual Panathlon has revitalised what we do in PE. Sport and PE is a key part of the children achieving and living a fulfilled life. We need to give them opportunities to find out what they’re good at, and this does exactly that.”

Emma Monaghan, Head, Gillas Lane Primary Academy.

Almost **100%** of teachers felt enabled by Panathlon to provide an inclusive approach and adapt to the ‘new normal’. The Virtual Programme has enabled schools to continue to offer physical activity and competition through the pandemic; given them valuable resources to make Panathlon accessible to even more students; and helped PE teachers to better structure their PE curriculum.

“It has been a challenging year to keep pupils active, both mentally and physically. It has been a very different delivery of PE across the school, therefore access to foundations such as yours providing the much-needed guidance and support to PE Leads like myself really does assist us to deliver a varied timetable to engage our pupils in many different, fun activities and not forgetting the competitive edge...this has lifted the spirits of staff and pupils across the school who have been involved.”

PE Lead Dee Banks School, Chester

This year, 77% say Panathlon has enabled PE and Sports to remain in children’s’ lives. In the context of the pandemic environment and dropping activity levels (particularly for disabled children), this impact is significant.

“Virtual Panathlon has allowed many of our schools to continue their involvement in Panathlon, keeping hundreds of local children engaged in PE and sport during this difficult term. The programme has given a much-needed purpose to our schools and a focus for their PE lessons. This in turn has maintained their enthusiasm for inclusive sport.”

Jeffrey Hoey, Partnership Development
Manager, North Suffolk School Games

“The Virtual Programme has been terrific for us. It has given us a structure to achieve our aims in PE and sport. The format has allowed us to really emphasise those key principles of competing, participating, enjoying yourself, and setting personal challenges – all the important things.”

PE coordinator Stuart Johnson.

Panathlon has helped schools like Park Community Academy to achieve the afPE Quality Mark, as they are recognised for their improvements in PE, school sport and physical activity, and in schools like The Hill Top School, detailed in Case Study 2, the Virtual Programme has been so beneficial that some schools will continue to integrate elements into their PE curriculum.

More than half the teachers surveyed felt more aware of how to adapt sports resources they had, to enable provision of sports in restricted environments, while over a quarter of teachers agree that Panathlon has delivered access to new equipment and sports, widening the provision possible.

Case Study: The Hill Top School, Virtual Programme to Remain Part of the Curriculum

Pupils at Hill Top School in Gateshead have taken part in Panathlon for the last seven years and they fully embraced the Virtual Programme when it was launched last year. The Virtual Programmes supported a virtual inter-house Panathlon “Games Day”; allowed all students within the autism unit to participate in half a day’s kurling within their bubbles; and helped upskill staff at the school in delivering PE and sport in more structured and competitive ways. The Virtual Panathlon has been so popular, that it will remain on their curriculum even after Covid-19 restrictions are fully lifted.

“New-Age Kurling is definitely an event I will engage with next year regardless of whether we’re back doing external events or not. It was just such a good event. It will give us something fun, inclusive and competitive to focus on during the winter months.” Teacher Sean Connolly, The Hill Top School



Making a Difference to Young Leaders

The rollout of Panathlon's Virtual Programme has opened more leadership opportunities to students, (often by Year 6 people) which have been positively embraced. Young Leaders have performed important roles organising, officiating, and guiding the athletes during competitions in schools, in the absence of the usual officials and larger events. In fact, during the pandemic this opportunity was increased for young leaders in special schools. 1 in 3 teachers feel that these leadership opportunities made a positive difference to those children's development. 1 in 10 feel it helped with transition to senior school.

The Young Leaders themselves recognise the value of the opportunity to help, have fun and feel like an important part of the programme.

"My job was important and I liked being important. I enjoyed competing against other schools even though we can't see them in real life, and I liked showing the younger children how to do the things."

Kodie, Youth Leader at Mildmay

Their roles as Young Leaders are reported by teachers to have developed students' leadership and communication skills, as well as confidence, self-esteem, and independence. The experience for Young Leaders at Gillas Lane Primary School was described as by Teaching Assistant, Mark Douglass, as "invaluable". While at Mildmay, Simon Ash, Teacher of the Deaf also recognised the additional opportunities and impact that the virtual competitions have delivered.

"It gives them a sense of empowerment and pride and independence in preparation for secondary school. They learned how to communicate with younger children and to keep them engaged in the activities. They have gained new techniques to help them in everyday life." Mark Douglas

"The adults who work with these young leaders have all commented on how this has made a huge difference to their self-esteem and confidence. We are very grateful for the opportunity given by Panathlon– they all absolutely loved it!"

Simon Ash

There is also evidence of how individual Youth Leaders have personally benefitted from their involvement in Panathlon. Emily Treweek, originally from Richmond School, volunteered to help at Primary and Secondary Panathlons. She loved the events, the fact that "teachers trust you with those amazing children" and with that the feeling of responsibility she felt you would not get anywhere else. She believes her involvement gave her a new understanding of what disabled children can achieve; increased her confidence, taught her ways of working with disabled children, and learnt she could make a difference in someone's life. During Panathlon Emily got opportunity mentor other leaders and now as a young TA, she has taken her experiences and passion from Panathlon forward into her career.

"Panathlon becomes part of your life, if you've been a leader or participant... it opens so many doors"

Emily Treweek, Youth Leader

Case Study: The Ashley School, Building Young Leaders during the Pandemic

Panathlon's Virtual Programme has had a positive impact on a group of five Young Leaders at The Ashley School Academy Trust, a special school in North Suffolk.



Almost the entire school (110 pupils in total) took part in Virtual Panathlon during the autumn term. Young Leaders Courtney, Dalton, Casey, Elsie and Keelan were on hand at every single session. Despite suspension of external events, Panathlon enabled Young Leaders to step up and perform important roles organising, officiating and guiding the athletes during competitions. The Young Leaders also had the opportunity to engage with GB Para Athletes in a virtual Q&A session. GB Athletes honoured Young Leaders with Medal and Certificates, recognising their efforts.

In addition to benefitting competing students, The Virtual Panathlon Programme has developed confidence and leadership skills in the Young Leaders it has engaged.

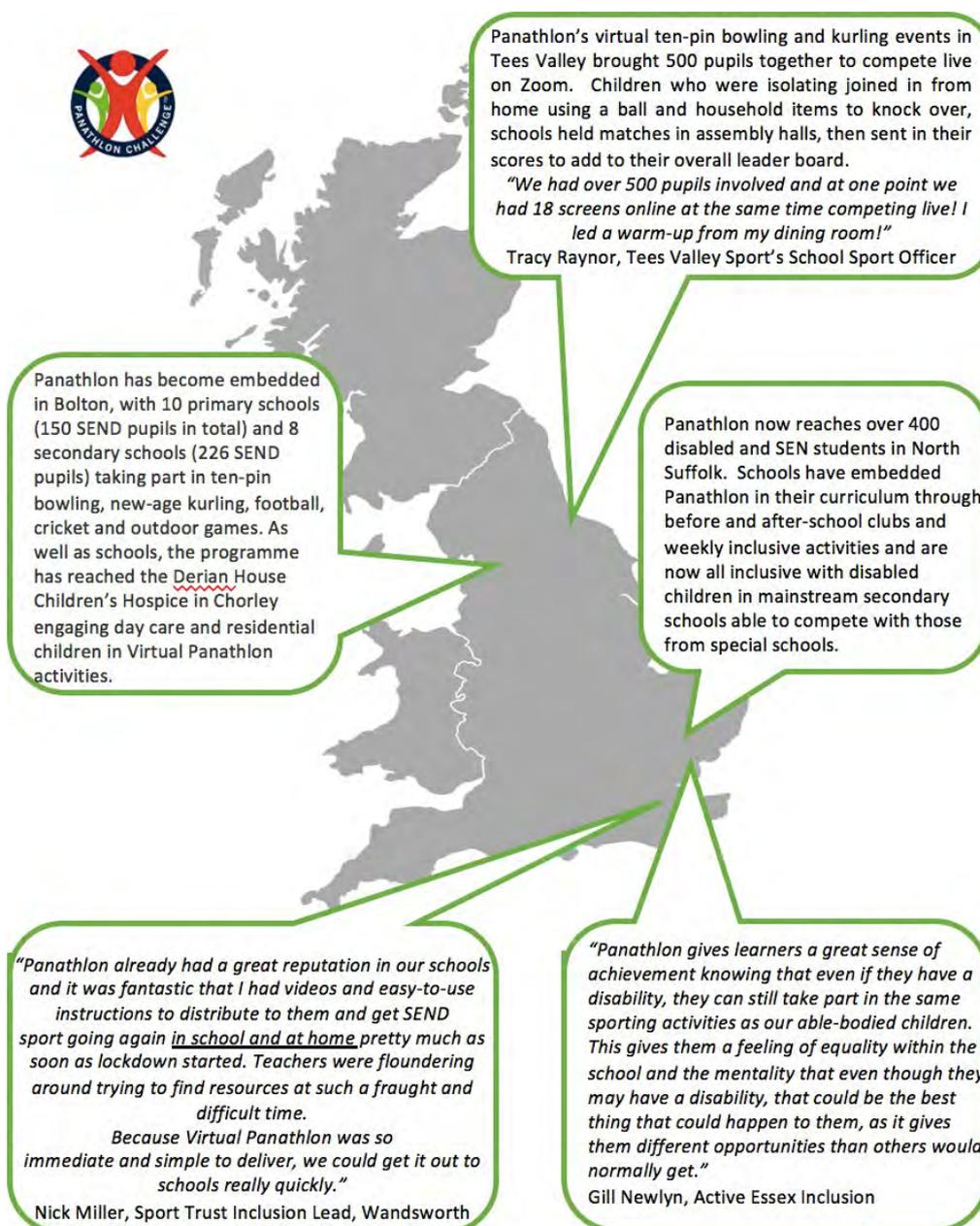
“Covid-19 has presented a whole load of challenges so this programme has given me the platform to enable our leaders to fulfil the criteria of the Sports Leaders course and clock up the hours required. That practical, hands-on experience is where they learn best. Virtual Panathlon has been so helpful and supportive.”

Andrew Deacon, The Ashley School

Making a Difference to the Inclusion Landscape

The Virtual Programme has delivered structured competitive sport provision for a cross-sector of children, most affected by the pandemic. For regional Inclusion Sports or Games specialists during the pandemic, it offered an opportunity to engage children in a new way, and re-design their area's approach to inclusive competitive sports. Those involved in Panathlon talk passionately about how the Virtual Programme has not just filled a gap but actually 'raised the profile of inclusive sport' across schools.

Crucially, Panathlon supported Inclusion Sports leads across the country to provide their schools with practical, engaging resources to help children stay active – at school, at home or in care settings. These are just some examples:



Panathlon Challenge

Panathlon's virtual ten-pin bowling and kurling events in Tees Valley brought 500 pupils together to compete live on Zoom. Children who were isolating joined in from home using a ball and household items to knock over, schools held matches in assembly halls, then sent in their scores to add to their overall leader board.
"We had over 500 pupils involved and at one point we had 18 screens online at the same time competing live! I led a warm-up from my dining room!"
 Tracy Raynor, Tees Valley Sport's School Sport Officer

Panathlon has become embedded in Bolton, with 10 primary schools (150 SEND pupils in total) and 8 secondary schools (226 SEND pupils) taking part in ten-pin bowling, new-age kurling, football, cricket and outdoor games. As well as schools, the programme has reached the Derian House Children's Hospice in Chorley engaging day care and residential children in Virtual Panathlon activities.

Panathlon now reaches over 400 disabled and SEN students in North Suffolk. Schools have embedded Panathlon in their curriculum through before and after-school clubs and weekly inclusive activities and are now all inclusive with disabled children in mainstream secondary schools able to compete with those from special schools.

*"Panathlon already had a great reputation in our schools and it was fantastic that I had videos and easy-to-use instructions to distribute to them and get SEND sport going again in school and at home pretty much as soon as lockdown started. Teachers were floundering around trying to find resources at such a fraught and difficult time.
 Because Virtual Panathlon was so immediate and simple to deliver, we could get it out to schools really quickly."*
 Nick Miller, Sport Trust Inclusion Lead, Wandsworth

"Panathlon gives learners a great sense of achievement knowing that even if they have a disability, they can still take part in the same sporting activities as our able-bodied children. This gives them a feeling of equality within the school and the mentality that even though they may have a disability, that could be the best thing that could happen to them, as it gives them different opportunities than others would normally get."
 Gill Newlyn, Active Essex Inclusion

The Future

Despite the challenges, the pandemic has placed Panathlon at the heart of inclusive sport provision, developing more resources and support which will be available well after the pandemic restrictions. And there is real interest in Panathlon combining its online and in-school delivery resources longer-term, given 9 in 10 teachers would be interested in a 'blended option' next year, combining these offers with physical events, heats and finals.

Asked how Panathlon could make more of a difference in the future, two other suggestions were made:

"Expanding programmes to include Older Adults. Can employees who work with this age group be trained to deliver these games in their settings, like care homes for example?"

"Create competitions for specific impairments such as the Autism days that are already being rolled out."

However, despite the suite of new resources and new Panathletes eager for more, it is also clear when asked about future provision that events and 'traditional' Panathlon remain key:

"To continue with the excellent opportunities provided. And a return to face-to-face competition at a Regional & National level."

"Just keep doing what they are doing. Looking forward to the events when we can all be together Fingers crossed!"

"We are running 'live' Panathlon events next year, training leaders and providing activities for a new group of children. It will make a huge impact".

"The provision during the pandemic has been outstanding. However, the events are an important part of our school calendar, and we can't wait for them to return!"

Perhaps most importantly when concluding this impact report, one PE teacher praises Panathlon for seeking feedback and using it to not just report its impact, but seek to create even greater social change:

"Keep providing opportunities for young people and to continue reflecting on your practice and looking for ways to improve."

Cath Weight
& Charlotte Turner
Bean Research
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