

## Written evidence submitted by StreetGames [CBE 121]

Submitted by Gary White (Sustainability and Housing Sector Lead) on behalf of StreetGames.

### Introduction to StreetGames

StreetGames is a charity that harnesses the power of sport to create positive change in disadvantaged neighbourhoods across the UK.

StreetGames champions and supports a network of over 1,600 locally trusted organisations (LTOs), spread across 308 different local authorities across England and Wales, that provide access to sport, physical activity and volunteering to children, young people, and families in the most disadvantaged and left-behind communities.

LTOs in the StreetGames network typically comprise small to medium community organisations, including charitable trusts, CICs, constituted community organisations, but also some large Leisure Trusts, Housing Associations and Local Authorities. The majority are part of the third sector.

LTOs provide hyperlocal access to services and activities, including Doorstep Sport, that improve the lives of local people across a range of outcomes including: physical and mental wellbeing, increasing skills and employability, reducing youth crime and antisocial behaviour and contributing to cohesion. Their success is founded upon their trusted status and ability to provide the right kind of sport, to engage with children, young people and improve quality of life in their wider community.

StreetGames builds partnerships and collaborations with key organisations and institutions, including Police and Crime Commissioners, Integrated Care Partnerships, Local Authorities, and the sport sector such as Active Partnerships, acting as a conduit between high level policy and hyper-local delivery.

StreetGames is a System Partner to Sport England and a National Partner to Sport Wales. It works closely with Government departments including the Department for Education's Holiday Activities and Food, and Opening Up Schools Programmes, the Ministry of Justice's Youth Justice Sport Fund, and developing social prescribing for children and young people with the Department for Health and Social Care.

### Context

We appreciate the opportunity to make this late submission to the Committee to support their inquiry into Children, Young People, and the Built Environment. StreetGames believes there is a strong link between our work with Housing Associations, Doorstep Sport, and the built environment. StreetGames has worked with social housing providers since 2010 and we share many common priorities, including community cohesion, healthy lifestyles, training and employment and community safety. We currently partner with seven housing associations to create and develop Doorstep Sport projects across England & Wales from housing association community investment and social value budgets.

By aligning our plans to grow Doorstep Sport with social housing providers by focusing resources in priority locations through place based working and disseminating our insight from existing projects, we aim to grow

Doorstep Sport delivery in social housing areas and providing more opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people to get and stay active in their local communities.

We have noted the submission by Playing Out, supported by several organisations, and we support the broad content of their submission.

### **The experiences of children and young people of their built environment**

How do children and young people experience outdoor spaces in towns, cities, and rural areas across the country?

- Recent [research](#) shows that participation in informal sport is now more popular than organised club sport. Informal sport and leisure activities rely on open and casual access, where individuals join in on what might be organised and routine schedules but largely on a ‘turn up and play’ basis. It occurs in the public spaces in urban environments ranging from green spaces and open access facilities on social housing estates’ multi activity games areas (MUGAs) to ‘reused’ spaces such as residential streets, alleyways, and city squares but also in some indoor sports spaces (Wise et al., 2018; van den Bogert and Jeanes et al., this volume).
- Access to suitable spaces where children and young people can play and be physically active is a significant problem, particularly in urban areas. The lack of provision and maintenance of green spaces, playgrounds, and other outdoor recreation areas, has been detrimental to the health and well-being of young people.
- Due to the lack of suitable outdoor spaces for play and physical activity within residential areas, young people’s informal participation in exercise, such as playing football or basketball or cycling, can be perceived as low level anti-social behaviour by some residents. Although ‘No Ball Games’ signs are not legally enforceable, they continue to be prevalent within some housing estates and are an additional factor in dissuading children and young people from accessing open spaces and taking part in physical activity.
- Effective planning and design of housing areas can provide an environment that balances the needs of all residents and age groups, encouraging children to play and be physically active within their communities without there being a negative impact on the quality of life of other people.
- The work of StreetGames and other organisations to develop the concept of ‘Doorstep Sport’ has identified five key rights that underpin successful delivery: sport delivered at the right time, in the right place, in the right style, by the right people and at the right price. This work has shown that ‘the right place’ is almost always within the immediate neighbourhood where young people live and that they are unlikely to travel beyond 1 mile from home. The cost and availability of transport and the impact of territorial issues on personal safety within urban areas are all factors here.
- The quality of green spaces and recreation areas is also a key factor in whether children and young people can access opportunities to play and participate in physical activity. The lack of maintenance and upkeep of free to access outdoor spaces is a significant barrier. Children and their parents are far more likely to use clean, safe, and well-lit green spaces, playgrounds and recreation areas. Multi-use games areas (MUGAs) within housing estates can be a valuable local asset, but all too often young people are confronted with ageing playing surfaces, broken glass, damaged fencing, and lights that are no longer operational.

How do these experiences vary across income, race, gender, age?

- There is a clear 'sporting inequality gap' for young people from low-income, underserved communities. This is reflected in the data from the recently published Sport England 'Active Lives Children and Young People Survey' 2022/23, which shows a only 44% of CYP from low affluence families are 'active'/meeting CMO guidelines (*an average of 150+ mins per day*) compared to 55% from high affluence families, whilst 34% are 'less active' (*less than an average of 30 mins per day*) compared to just 22% of CYP from high affluence families. StreetGames exists to bridge this inequality gap and offer sport, play and physical activity in a way that meets the needs and motivations of children and young people from lower socio-economic groups.
- There are also similar disparities by 'place' – with only 44% of children and young people living in the most deprived places being 'active' compared to 49% for children and young people living in the least deprived places.
- Disparities 'widen' outside school hours – only 50% of children and young people from low affluence families undertaking 30+ active minutes a day outside school hours, compared to 60% of children and young people from high affluence families. During school hours the disparity is smaller (5%)
- There are a range of additional barriers faced by young women and girls in underserved communities when it comes to participating in sport and physical activities. The *1,000 Young Voices* research commissioned by StreetGames in 2023 shows that young women and girls in these communities participate less in and physical activity - Only 17% of girls selected '*playing sport/physical activity*' from a list of activities about what they enjoy doing in their spare time – compared to 32% of boys. Similarly, only 13% of girls selected '*watching sport/physical activity*' compared to 29% of boys. The most common aspects which girls selected in terms of 'barriers' that make it difficult for them to take part in sport/physical activity included – not feeling confident (39%), can't afford it (38%), a lack of time (36%), feeling too anxious (35%), being too self-conscious (35%), not being a sporty person (27%), periods/PMT (26%). Although the aspects mentioned, spanned both psychological and physical factors for both boys and girls, a higher proportion of girls cited psychological barriers. They have limited access to opportunities compared to their male counterparts and peers from wealthier backgrounds. As a result, their enthusiasm for sport and physical activity is often lower.

How easily can children and young people travel to outdoor spaces and schools? How has this changed over the years?

- As outlined above, the cost of public transport and limited access to personal transport are factors that limit the access to outdoor spaces and other recreation facilities for children and young people, particularly those from less affluent backgrounds [who spend less money on travel](#). With personal safety issues and the impact of territorial factors increasingly limiting the horizons of some young people to their immediate neighbourhood, the provision of open spaces that are local, well designed, and properly managed & maintained is a key factor in providing opportunities or informal play and more organised exercise programmes. This is a significant driver of the success of Doorstep Sport Clubs: they are run hyper-locally by local people.

## The planning system

How well are children and young people's needs currently met by the planning process in terms of policy and guidance?

- There is no statutory requirement within national planning guidance for children and young people to be consulted and included in decision making and the design of green spaces, playgrounds, and recreation areas. For StreetGames the principle of Youth Voice is integral to the work of the charity. It is an approach that provides opportunities for youth leadership and youth social action and a concept which stretches traditional ideas of volunteering to ensure that young people having a meaningful say in planning and running activities. Incorporating this approach into the planning, design and operation of play areas and open spaces, particularly within residential developments, would be a significant step forward in creating neighbourhoods where children and young people can engage in positive activities.

How are children and young people's views and voices heard, considered, and acted upon in the planning system if at all?

- Although there are notable exceptions, particularly within the social housing sector, this approach is not widespread or under pinned by any national policy direction. [The work of StreetGames in Wales, supported by the South East & Mid Wales Collaborative Construction Framework \(SEWSCAP\)](#), provides a good model for how to empower young people to carry out consultation in their own communities and then play a central role in designing and delivering physical activity programmes that meet the needs of both themselves and their peers.

### **Best practice and evaluation**

Where are the examples of policy and good practice that are improving children and young people's experiences in the built environment, either directly or indirectly, in the UK or internationally?

- The [Doorstep Sport approach](#) adopted by StreetGames and other organisations provides a tried and tested methodology for engaging young people in underserved communities in play, sport and physical activity, ensuring that sport is delivered in a way that is enjoyable and accessible. At the core of Doorstep Sport is the provision of accessible and affordable opportunities for young people to take part in informal sport within their local neighbourhoods through vibrant, varied, fun and sociable sessions.
- By working with several social housing providers, including Places for People, Clarion Housing, the Riverside Group and Lewisham Homes, StreetGames have been able to support locally trusted organisations to engage children and young people in physical activity on housing estates across England and Wales, taking advantage of existing open spaces and community assets. Examples include regular multi-sport sessions using local spaces within the Places for People and Clarion housing estates [in Newcastle with Hat-Trick](#), [Bristol with Bristol City](#) and in [Birmingham with Alum Rock](#).
- Working with Riverside Housing on housing estates in Workington (Salterbeck) and Stoke-on Trent (Moss Green) in the summer of 2023, StreetGames carried out consultation with young people, adult residents, and local organisations to map current opportunities for children's play and

physical activity and make recommendations for future provision. The resulting report was used a basis for a £40,000 investment from the Riverside Foundation to establish new activity programmes for young people.

- The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, established across England by the Department for Education in 2019, [has achieved significant success](#) in providing children with access to play, exercise, positive activities, and healthy eating within their communities during school holiday periods, providing investment in locally trusted organisations and utilising community assets. StreetGames has managed HAF delivery in Birmingham, Newcastle & Derby and has extended the provision of physical activity and healthy food into term time periods through delivery of the 'Fit & Fed' programme in locations across England & Wales.
- Housing Associations own and manage significant community assets, including green spaces, playgrounds, MUGAs and community centres. Where these facilities are well maintained and residents and community groups are provided with support to establish activity programmes, they can become a hub for children's play and physical activity.
- By providing local people with advice, support, resources and training, organisations like Playing Out and StreetGames have empowered communities to create opportunities for children and families to play and participate in physical activity within their neighbourhoods. The StreetGames training Academy provides a programme of training that has helped to create a workforce of community coaches, sports leaders and young volunteers that deliver activities within neighbourhoods across the country. This training is designed to provide activity leaders with the skills to adapt sport and physical activities to fit within whatever local spaces and community assets are available.

How are these outcomes measured? For example, through economic or health and wellbeing indicators?

- The impact of the interventions detailed above are measured through a range of evaluation tools, including the Views System, Sport for Development Collective Survey, case studies, the HACT Social Value Calculator and independent research studies. These approaches are used to measure outcomes across a wide range of social policy areas, including health and physical activity, volunteering & employment, community safety and community cohesion.

### **Cross Government working**

How does the relationship of children and young people with the built environment overlap with policy areas beyond the work of DLUHC, such as public health, transport, policing, and net zero?

- Creating an environment where children and young people can engage in regular play, informal sport and exercise - through vibrant, varied, fun and sociable activities - can have a significant impact across a wide range of policy areas. Key to the success of Doorstep Sport is its adaptability. Delivered in the right way, this approach can be modified to achieve a wide range of positive impacts in communities, including combating holiday hunger, preventing youth offending and anti-social behaviour, developing skills & employability, and improving young people's physical health and mental wellbeing.

Are government departments working together to address children and young people's needs in this respect?

- Cross departmental working is vital to creating a built environment where children and young people have the right to access play, sport, and physical activity, particularly within low income, underserved communities. The creation of a cross-departmental National Physical Activity Taskforce (NPAT), as recommended in 'Get Active' - the government sport and physical strategy launched in 2023 - was a positive step in that direction. Building on this approach and creating stronger links between the work of relevant government departments and policy initiatives would greatly enhance efforts to address the challenges identified in this statement. One example would be to consider how the provisions of the Social Value Act (2012) could be used to provide resources to design and create environments that are child friendly and promote active play and recreation, there being opportunities to do this within both new residential developments and where social landlords are refurbishing existing housing stock. The current [PlayZones](#) programme, being delivered by the Football Foundation on behalf of DCMS, Sport England, FA and the Premier League, also offers an opportunity for closer working with DLUHC and the social housing sector to deliver shared objectives in the areas of children and young people's health & well-being, physical activity and community cohesion.
- The increased emphasis on 'place-based working' across all areas of social policy should also help to encourage a more joined up approach at a national, regional and local level.

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