

StreetGames – Written evidence (NPS0091)

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Introduction

StreetGames is a charity that harnesses the power of sport to create positive change in low-income, underserved neighbourhoods across the UK.

StreetGames champions and supports a network of over 1,400 locally trusted organisations (LTOs) 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.

LTOs work to improve the quality of life in their communities. They provide hyperlocal access to services and activities, including Doorstep Sport,¹ 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 uses its insight and expertise from working with LTOs to inform its wider work with more traditional sport, including positively influencing the approaches of NGBs and leisure providers to the needs of low-income, under-served communities.

Question 1: How can local delivery, including funding structures, of sport and recreation be improved to ensure that people of all ages and abilities are able to lead an active lifestyle?

Our response focuses on children, young people and their families from the most disadvantaged communities and for these groups - attractive, accessible local provision is essential in supporting them to lead an active lifestyle. In our experience, it is often the locally trusted community organisations (LTOs) which typically sit outside 'traditional sports structures' which provide the right opportunities to be active in these communities (*see further information provided in Q2*).

LTOs already play a crucial role in the 'levelling up' agenda and ambitions to reduce long-standing inequalities both in sport and wider individual and community wellbeing. They could do more. Sustained investment and support must be provided for these types of community organisations to prevent large numbers of them disappearing forever in the wake of the pandemic. Further investment into LTOs would enhance their capacity enabling them to meet local demand.

¹ Doorstep Sport is sport delivered in local neighbourhoods at the right time, in the right place, at the right price, in the right style and by the right people. Doorstep Sport is designed to both increase and sustain activity levels and to achieve social outcomes.

In the wake of COVID-19 LTOs should be recognised and valued in the same way as more traditional sports clubs. They are a crucial part of the social fabric of their neighbourhoods and from a grassroots sport perspective, they can often be the sole providers in some disadvantaged communities.

Collaborative working within local areas will be essential to help more people lead an active life. There are a number of examples where collaboration is currently taking place, including:

- StreetGames work developing and supporting [Collaborative Clusters in 50 disadvantaged areas](#) to increase activity levels through investment from Sport England.
- The Sport England [Local Delivery Pilots](#) (LDPs)
- The Football Foundation [Active Through Football](#) project.

We would recommend that collaborative, place-based initiatives aimed at increasing activity levels need to:

- Have a clear ambition and scope - interventions aimed at engaging 'whole populations' rather than a specific target group are far less likely to succeed. For example, people living in low-income areas are not a single homogenous group. Often there is a lack of clarity about which organisations and partners should be involved (*particularly given the complexity of the grass roots sporting landscape*) meaning that sometimes, key partners who could help increase activity levels get 'left out'.
- Consider carefully the needs of different target groups. For example, in some instances 'whole population' approaches have resulted in the needs of young people not being prioritised and consequently, not getting the attention they need.
- Incorporate a strong learning culture, one which seeks to learn from both successes, challenges and 'failures' and adjust plans/activities accordingly, rather than solely focusing on achieving quantitative targets and what can be easily measured. Sport Wales for example have recently adopted a new [investment model](#) which does exactly this, using accountability statements.
- Consider use of the [Collaboration Continuum](#) - as a useful model to guide collaborative work.

Question 2: How can children and young people be encouraged to participate in sport and recreation both at school and outside school, and lead an active lifestyle?

StreetGames' work is primarily focused within community rather than school settings and therefore our response to this question is predominantly focused on how best to encourage participation in sport/recreation outside of school hours.

Knowing what is 'right' for young people living in low-income areas requires a strong understanding of their lives - their attitudes, wants, motivations and behaviours.

Research and insight undertaken by StreetGames over the past ten years (often in partnership with Universities and research agencies) has highlighted that there are a range of different factors that impact on children and young people's ability to take part in sport and recreation. Children and young people growing

up in low-income areas typically have less opportunities to be active than their more affluent peers. For many, their lives can be complex and they may face multiple challenges on a daily basis - barriers to participation in sport/recreation are likely to span a variety of issues relating to:

- **Capability** – for example: not feeling good enough, or feeling too unfit or being embarrassed about their body;
- **Opportunity** –for example: activities being too expensive, too far away, not knowing where to go, not having the right kit or having no-one to go with;
- **Motivation** –for example: not being interested in activities that are available, being too tired or too busy.

These young people are also sensitive to relatively small triggers and barriers which mean that they are often prone to drifting in and out of sport and recreation.

However, our experience and insight has shown us that this audience can be encouraged to take part via **a doorstep sport approach**. Doorstep sport is designed to overcome the barriers outlined above.

Through £20m investment from Sport England between 2013-2017 StreetGames led the roll-out of 1,000 Doorstep Sport Clubs (DSCs) within areas of deprivation which engaged over 120,000 children and young people – comprising 76% from the two most deprived quintiles based on IMD rankings, 34% females, 32% BAME and 5% disability. 71% of DSCs were still running a year after the funding period ended.

The [Lessons of Doorstep Sport](#) insight report contains the learning from this investment and highlighted:

- The importance of having a strong understanding about young people's lives and the offers that are likely to appeal. DSCs were built upon a strong insight led approach, whilst also allowing for 'inflight' adjustments to be made along the way based on learning.
- The importance of developing offers shaped by 'The Five Rights' of doorstep sport (i.e. The Right: time, place, price, style and people), sound lifestyle insights and on-the-ground experience of individual communities.
- A recognition, that engaging and retaining some females often won't 'just happen' as a matter of course. In our experience, it required specific efforts including: ring-fenced funding, training for delivery staff, support from specialist Doorstep Sport Advisors, the encouragement of female peer promoters and motivators and female-only offers.
- To retain young people in activities and help them to develop personally requires more than 'just' activity sessions. Sessions need to provide varied and vibrant activities, with opportunities to try new sports, take on new challenges, gain new experiences or go to new places - for example through opportunities to connect with grand events and go on group trips and socials.
- Many young people are keen to volunteer and help out at their local doorstep sport sessions through our FABS! approach (i.e. volunteering opportunities that are fun, altruistic, build a sense of belonging and allow for self-development).

- The skills of doorstep sport leaders are critically important. In particular, young people value leaders with a blend of: interpersonal skills, together with an ability to lead a range of sports and someone who is friendly, caring and motivated, involves young people in shaping sessions and models positive behaviour. These skills together with opportunities to help shape and lead sessions provide really valuable opportunities for those attending to develop personally and grow key life skills.

Doorstep Sport Clubs are delivered by a variety of different types of organisations, including: community organisations, charities, CiCs, trusts, housing associations, local authorities and schools/colleges – being known and trusted within a local community is what is most important.

Although our work is predominantly community rather than school focused, we recognise that:

- Schools can and should play a vital role in the activity levels in low-income communities.

We know how valuable activities in the 4-6pm period can be in helping young people to develop key life skills and to improve community safety and would therefore welcome proposals which seek to increase opportunities and access. We would advocate that any new proposals consider opportunities for 'extra-curricular' type activities that can be provided both on and off school sites. From our work, we know that for some young people the thought of attending extra-curricular or community activities on a school site is unappealing. For example, research undertaken for the Sutton Trust: *'Life Lessons, Improving essential life skills for young people'* by Carl Cullinane and Rebecca Montacute, October 2017 found that:

'There are substantial socio-economic gaps in access to extra-curricular activities, with pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds less likely to take up activities than their better off peers (46% compared to 66%), with just half of those receiving free school meals (FSM) taking part. This is concerning, as it is disadvantaged groups that have most to gain from taking part in such activities. There are also substantial gaps in provision, with schools with higher numbers of FSM pupils less likely to offer certain activities. Schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils are twice as likely to offer debating clubs as schools with the highest (70% compared to 35%)'.

- The period immediately after the school day, between 4pm and 6pm, offers fertile ground for developing stronger relationships between schools and LTOs in the support of children and young people's activity levels and wellbeing. There is also an immediate opportunity to develop these relationships through the new [Holiday Activities with Food](#) investment from the Department for Education. This investment through local authorities requires the provision of 6 weeks of holiday activities with food during 2021 for children and young people eligible for FSM. This could provide a catalyst for a more seamless connection between school settings and community-based activity.

Question 3: How can adults of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those from under-represented groups be encouraged to lead more active lifestyles?

To encourage people from lower socio-economic groups (LSEGs) to be more active, there needs to be better access to local, affordable and attractive provision.

It is essential that all of the component parts of the doorstep sport approach, i.e. all 'five rights', are applied if this group is to be activated and engaged in sport/recreation. It is not enough to simply provide free activities. If the offer is inaccessible in terms of location, timing and style or if the offer is only promoted via marketing led campaigns it is far less likely to succeed.

Conversely, providing a really attractive and supported offer at a high price is likely to fail. Analysis of data included in the Living Costs & Food Survey by SIRC at Sheffield Hallam University showed that [low-income households spend](#) on average just £3.21 per week on active sport compared to an average income household spend of circa £12.11. For many of these families disposable income is limited and paying for exercise is simply not a priority. To succeed, the admission cost of an activity needs to be kept low, with no joining fee and no contract commitment to pay in the future.

Local provision needs to provide people with a choice of different ways to be active, which might include: 'traditional' sports, fitness activities and a local environment which facilitates informal participation not only in activities such as walking, running and cycling but also informal 'sport' such as a kick-about in the park.

Examples of good practice from the StreetGames network include: Doorstep Sport Clubs (*as detailed above*), our award winning [Us Girls](#) intervention – which looks to combat the double jeopardy faced by females from LSEGs and [Club1](#) which supports young people from LSEGs to participate in 'solo' sports such as running, cycling, fitness and exercise that are the most likely to continue through different periods in adulthood.

A vital part of local sporting infrastructure, are public sport and leisure facilities. These have been severely impacted by the pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions. It is important that they are both supported to stay open and equally importantly are incentivised and supported to be more accessible for people on low incomes/lower socio-economic groups (LSEGs) if long-standing inequalities are to be addressed.

Data from Sport England's National Facility Benchmarking Service (NBS) includes information about how 'representative' sport and leisure facility users are by comparison to expected numbers based on the demographics of the catchment population.

NBS data has shown that over time, users from LSEGs are increasingly under-represented in public sports halls and swimming pools.

Data captured between 2014-2019 shows a decrease in users from lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 6-7). The 'best' performing facilities showed a decline from a score of 0.95 in 2014 to 0.6 in 2019 [*this means that they attracted 95% of the 'expected' level in 2014, but only 60% in 2019*]. Whilst scores at the

'worst' performing facilities declined from 0.44 in 2014 to 0.29 in 2019. [*i.e. they attracted only 44% of the 'expected' level in 2014 and just 29% in 2019*].

Question 4: Are the Sporting Future priorities right and how successful has the government been in measuring and delivering these outcomes to date?

At StreetGames we know from experience that appropriately delivered sport has the power to help address social inequalities, transform lives and strengthen low-income communities. Through our work we have seen young people: increase their activity levels, improve their mental wellbeing, develop personally, volunteer and undertake social action within their communities and go on to gain employment – see data from the StreetGames 2019-20 [Participant Survey](#).

The five outcome priorities in Sporting Future, have helped to build awareness of the important role that sport can play in addressing inequalities and contributing to individual and societal wellbeing. This policy approach has helped StreetGames to further 'open up' conversations and secure investment for sport from the non-sports sector and wider government departments. We fully support the inclusion and prioritisation of wider outcomes in Sporting Future. We feel that with the right prominence these could help to shape sport's contribution to the government's wider 'levelling up' agenda. We also believe that the social and community development outcome could be redefined to better highlight the preventative role that sport can play in community safety and cohesion.

Sport England's Active Lives Survey provides strong population wide data on sports participation. This includes validated 'marker' questions for the five priority outcomes, which has shown a strong positive association between taking part in sport and/volunteering and these outcomes.

During the period since Sporting Future was launched in 2015 and the Sport England response, 'Towards An Active Nation', significant emphasis has been placed on increasing activity levels – particularly in terms of decreasing the proportion of people that are 'inactive'. Whilst this is clearly important from a public health perspective, it risks reducing the support for people who may be undertaking some activity, but need help to maintain their current activity or to do more and in particular those from LSEG backgrounds for whom there can be significant gains in terms of mental well-being, individual, social or community development.

The wider risk of focusing measurement on just a small number of validated 'marker' questions, is that some learning and elements of practice are not being effectively recognised - as Einstein said: "*Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted*".

Question 5: Is government capturing an accurate picture of how people participate in sport and recreation activities in its data collection? How could this be improved?

There are a number of national surveys which provide strong population wide data on sports participation, most notably: Sport England's [Active Lives](#) Survey and the DCMS [Taking Part](#) Survey.

The Active Lives Survey in particular provides a diverse range of data relating to sport/ physical activity participation for both adults and children/young people – including how regularly active people are, types of activity undertaken and volunteering. The continuous nature and robust sample sizes enable rigorous data analysis to be undertaken including: year on year comparisons and cross-tabulation by specific demographic and geographic sub-sets.

To build on the above, improvements we would welcome to the Active Lives Survey, include:

- An ability to analyse more easily how those that are categorised as 'active' and 'fairly active' are being made up (*i.e. how many of their 'active' minutes were derived from active transport v sports participation as there are often different motivations and benefits to participating in these activities*).
- An ability to understand more about how and **where** people are being active (*i.e. specific types of 'settings' and levels of participation in informal v formal settings*).
- The inclusion of household income within demographic analysis
- An ability to 'drill down' by multiple demographic cross-tabulations within the Active Lives Tool

In addition, to quantitative data collection, we think that it is also important to capture lived experiences, individual 'stories' and case studies to share how people participate in sport and recreation activities and bring the quantitative data to life.

Question 6: How can racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and ableism in sport be tackled?

During 2020, StreetGames worked closely with Stonewall to understand the experience of young people and coaches in community sport of LGBT inclusion, exclusion or abuse. Coaches highlighted their ambition to include all and to provide inclusive spaces. The main barrier they shared was confidence in understanding relevant issues and finding and using the appropriate language.

Young people involved in the work told us that, in the main, their experience in community sports and youth clubs was positive. That they still experienced and witnessed bullying and harassment mostly in school. Young people echoed that where their coaches and leaders felt comfortable talking about issues that related to LGBT people the whole experience of sessions was better.

Our core findings, now being actioned in a continued partnership with Stonewall, are that training to improve confidence and understanding is central to increasing inclusion in community sport and youth clubs.

Although this research specifically related only to homophobia and transphobia our wider experience supporting community groups that work with a range of groups at risk of exclusion reiterates the key findings above: having coaches and

leaders who are confident in discussing issues and understand language use is key to successfully creating inclusive environments for sport.

Question 7: What can be done to improve and implement effective duty of care and safeguarding standards for sports and recreation activities at all levels?

We believe there needs to be a 'cultural shift' to create a more holistic and proactive approach to welfare and wellbeing within sport. Safeguarding is too often viewed as a process – something that needs to be completed or passed (e.g. DBS checks/ policy updated) rather than being seen as a practice and a way of operating where we constantly strive to improve our offer for children, young people and vulnerable adults. To do this requires improvements across a range of areas, including:

- *Training & Education:* A review of the place of safeguarding training within sport needs to take place. Without putting additional pressures on coaches, safeguarding should be integrated into coaching qualifications rather being provided via an additional, bolt-on course.
- *Support:* Greater support is required for safeguarding leads within sports organisations. The safeguarding role is regularly undertaken by a volunteer in community clubs or where it is fulfilled by a paid member of staff it may form only a relatively small element of their role. There needs to be more tailored support, training and recognition of safeguarding lead roles within organisations.
- *Reporting:* The sector would benefit from improved reporting and incident management, including greater use of technology and incident management systems. Often reporting systems are poor at a local level and there is a lack of consistency. An improvement in reporting would help to provide a better understanding of less serious welfare and safeguarding issues and foster a more proactive approach around safeguarding.
- *Investment:* There is a need for increased investment in safeguarding/ support mechanisms within sport to provide localised peer support and expert support networks.

Question 8: What are the opportunities and challenges facing elite sports in the UK and what can be done to make national sports governing bodies more accountable?

National data has long shown significant inequalities by socio-economic group - not only in terms of grass roots participation in sport, but also at an elite level and within traditional sporting structures (e.g. club membership, coaching/tuition) For example, data shows that:

- A third of England sporting internationals have attended independent schools
- Living Cost and Food Survey data from 2019 shows a significant discrepancy in average annual spend between low income households (those in the bottom 20%) and high income households (those in the top

20%) in terms of sports participation (£15 as against £144) and sports subscriptions (£29 as against £270)

- Active People Survey data (APS 10 2015-16) showed that whilst 25.7% of adults from higher socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 1-4) were sports club members it was just 15.1% from lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 5-8).

To help address these stubborn inequalities there needs to be significant cultural changes and internal system changes within NGBs so that there are more accessible and inclusive offers for people from LSEGs. Collaborative working will be critical in driving this agenda forwards and will need to include a broad span of organisations. There are a number of examples:

- The LTA Serves Programme looks to support 400 underserved communities to develop a tennis for development programme for young people. The LTA have worked closely with StreetGames to design, implement and develop the Serves Programme and in time, to 'mainstream' into ongoing tennis delivery as part of 'Tennis Opened Up'. StreetGames would endorse and support this approach encouraging more NGBs to do the same.
- StreetGames has supported the Welsh Rugby Union to take a whole organisation approach to understanding and addressing the needs and barriers to their sport for young people from low-income backgrounds.
- Football Foundation Active Through Football initiative *as detailed above*.

Question 9: What successful policy interventions have other countries used to encourage people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to participate in sport and recreation, and lead more active lifestyles?

Since 2011 StreetGames has worked with the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA). This has enabled us to partner with organisations with similar purposes to share and test approaches to inequality in activity levels. ISCA collects best practice across a range of physical activity approaches and publishes these on their website <http://isca-web.org/english/> and shares them at their annual MOVE Congress.

As an example, we worked with SISU in Sweden who have developed effective routes to engaging refugees in sport and enabling refugees to develop their confidence and skills in planning and delivering their own sport. This has resulted in communities of active refugees who gain all the direct and indirect benefits of being active. SISU also worked to embed this work into existing local infrastructure and saw positive impact in social cohesion in their key delivery towns. <https://irts.isca.org/updates/podcast-sweden/>

Other expert partners we have encountered, whose approaches should be considered and understood are:

Women Win – <https://www.womenwin.org/>

V4Sport - <http://starastrona.v4sport.eu/>

**Question 10: Should there be a national plan for sport and recreation?
Why/why not?**

Any national plan for sport and recreation would need to be both distinctive and add value to the current government sports strategy, Sporting Future and complementary to the recently published Sport England strategy: Uniting the Movement. The expressed need and rationale is not immediately evident to us.

Within the current and recent strategic landscape sport and physical activity tend to often be considered and delivered in tandem. However, not all of the wider benefits that can be achieved through sport can be achieved simply through being active. For example, our research shows that whilst many young people from low-income backgrounds are active through walking or cycling, this is often through necessity rather than choice. Being active in this way will not contribute to the enjoyment, confidence and sporting capital that will support lifelong sports participation.

We believe that any national plan for sport and recreation should:

- Take into account the broadest possible span of organisations that help people to regularly take part in sport/recreation and be more active i.e. that in the contribution made by traditional actors such as NGBs and leisure centres be considered alongside the role played by other community organisations and bodies that influence activity levels.
- Emphasises the important role that appropriately delivered sport can play in helping to address social inequalities and the current government's wider 'levelling up' agenda
- Should be clearly linked to the wider strategy for Civil Society to be developed in response to the pandemic
- Protect the important and valuable role played by sport in helping people to be active.

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