

Lord's Taverners – Written Evidence (NPS0174)

About Lord's Taverners

The Lord's Taverners is the UK's leading youth cricket and disability sports charity. We break down barriers and empower disadvantaged and disabled young people to fulfil their potential and build life skills through cricket. Our charitable programmes support some of the most marginalised and at-risk young people in the UK using sport and recreation to build links between communities and encouraging groups to play sport, learn and enjoy life together.

Lord's Taverners free cricket programmes impacted the lives of a record 12,000 participants in 2020 despite the Covid-19 pandemic – with approval from many participants, parents and others around them, demonstrating our work has never been more vital.

Our charity objectives are to:

- Increase opportunities for regular participation
- Improve health, mental wellbeing and future prospects of participants
- Strengthen community and social cohesion
- Develop a network of volunteers, coaches and role models

These are central to our programmes (detailed below), advising and shaping the work we do and how we evaluate the impact we are having.

Wicketz

Wicketz is a free community cricket programme, initially aimed at young people aged 8-19, living in areas with high levels of poverty. It provides year-round weekly cricket sessions as well as workshops that teach vital life skills. It breaks down barriers. With the support of partners such as the Home Office, local community partners and police forces, it tackles some of the most challenging social issues faced by young people in the UK. By establishing sustainable community cricket hubs in deprived areas, we provide cricket sessions with a focus on breaking down barriers, developing crucial life and social skills, creating stronger communities and enabling brighter futures for those taking part.

Super 1s

Super 1s gives young people with a disability aged 12-25 the chance to play regular, competitive cricket. By creating community cricket hubs where young people can receive coaching, we give participants the chance to compete against their peers, enjoy the benefits of playing sport and learn the vital life skills that help them to grow in independence and confidence and fulfil potential in all aspects of their futures.

Table Cricket

Table cricket is an adapted version of cricket, played on a table tennis table and specially designed to give young people living with a disability the chance to play and compete in sport, while learning leadership, team and social skills.

Sports Kit Recycling

Many young people in the UK and across the world find it hard to access sport, with one of the main barriers being a simple lack of access to the right kit and equipment. Our sports kit recycling programme collects usable kit from across the UK through a network of local 'collection hubs'. The kit is then sorted and redistributed to partner organisations within the UK and around the world, who can put it to great use in their communities, using team sport to teach key life skills.

Evidence Submission

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? For example, how successfully do local authorities and other bodies such as Active Partnerships, Leisure Trusts, local sports clubs and charities work together, and how might coordination be improved?

Local delivery success and working well with local partners

We have had plenty of success since the introduction of our community cricket programmes - engaging with participants through local schools, sports clubs and a wide range of local partners.

Preparation is key. Before starting programme activity in any location, we research all aspects thoroughly, involving those who know the local area (we always work with the local county cricket board when introducing a new Wicketz or Super 1s project for example). Every project or hub we introduce and deliver requires multiple links with other sports and community provision - community sports bodies, schools, charities, local businesses and local authorities.

We take this approach first and foremost to ensure that there is a need for Wicketz in a particular community. Furthermore, we need to establish that if we are going to work in an area there is the network in place to deliver effectively. It is important to also understand the landscape of similar projects within an area to ensure we are not replicating a project which is already available and to fully understand what can form part of a wider offer for a young person. The knowledge of the county cricket boards and other community sport bodies is vital in this instance.

The links we create with local businesses and local authorities are varied in terms of level of involvement, but all form a vital part of a project. For example, creating links with the local authority can help with reducing venue costs or create a link for families to access other community initiatives. With regards to business support, we have had support with anything from providing food and drink for our participants who live in low-income families, to providing work experience opportunities to young people who wouldn't get those opportunities without the link with Wicketz.

Vital to the success of Super 1s and Wicketz is working with local county cricket boards to appoint Development Officers for each project. The combination of a local full-time employee and local county board provides strong knowledge of the local area and the challenges faced by those who would not otherwise have access to sport. This helps shape a project, giving it the best chance of engaging the young people that most need it and making it a success. Development Officers have also become mentors for participants and valuable

sounding boards for parents or carers, not just for engaging in year-round programme sessions but for participants' personal development too.

Cricket is the tool that engages young people to attend sessions. Wider outcomes - personal and lifelong skills development, building brighter futures and leading a healthy and active lifestyles are all a critical and integral part of the programmes. We introduce relevant educational elements to every hub when the time is right.

We have Wicketz projects across the country including Wales and Scotland, and they look slightly different from location to location, because an important aspect of Wicketz is that we target the social issues and subjects that are most relevant in the participants' local community. For example, in Redditch we recently hosted a workshop on knife crime and self defence with the Redditch Self Defence Association due to knife crime being particularly prevalent in that area.

Another example is in our West Midlands project where we integrated and worked really closely with the police. There was a big issue in that local community with lots of our participants, that are largely from the Asian community, and a mistrust with the police. We worked very closely with the police and embedded some of the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in to our Wicketz session. They turned up in sports clothes instead of their uniform and supported our coaches to deliver coaching sessions and it worked really well. Six months later, the police reported that some of the young people that had been spitting at them on the streets were now addressing them by their first names and crossing the street to talk to them. Police also reported a drop in crime in the area.

Other examples of learning are beach and water safety in coastal towns, sun safety and personal health for disabled young people, sugar smart and healthy eating where obesity was a concern, street first aid where gang activity is an issue, mental health awareness particularly as a result of Covid.

The nature of our projects means that we have to be very flexible as things often do not pan out as we planned. Working in communities and disadvantaged areas sometimes means we have to rethink initial plans and react to what we encounter on the ground.

We are always looking to upskill our Development Officers/coaches and ensure they understand the aims of the programme, can make key local links, work with young people and make all sessions friendly, sociable, inclusive, fun and safe to attract those young people we want to reach. Coaching itself is the least important bit of our work, what is critical is that they can engage, empathise, talk to, understand, mentor and respond to the young people we strive to help.

Challenges

A shortage of green or indoor space (main obstacles being availability, accessibility, proximity, cost, safety, inclusivity) is a challenge, particularly in deprived areas where we deliver Wicketz. Venue availability can dictate location choices but being in or close to areas and the young people that most need the intervention of our programmes is important. Choosing session venues with good transport links and proximity to school or college is extremely important to make our programmes as accessible as possible. This is particularly critical for

disability programmes along with the accessibility of the venue itself once they get there.

We also need to be aware of the days and times that work best for participants and parents or carers in their respective communities. For example, we need to be conscious of school or college activity (both in and out of school hours), other sports and religious requirements (e.g. being aware of Ramadan and prayer times).

What is core to our programmes is that they are a long term, not short-term intervention. Often, we work with communities that have a level of mistrust with short-term interventions that can be actually damaging in the long run. Before we start any new project, we work on an initial three-year project plan to demonstrate our commitment to all the locations we take any programmes. Several of our Super 1s and Wicketz projects have now been running for 6–8 years and we are still looking ahead to continuing support for these and other projects.

Trust is very important. Building trust and respect takes time and we stick with the project even if initially only a small number of participants attend sessions. We know that only with trust can you start to move beyond just sport and make a long-term difference to a young person's life, and subsequently to bring positive change to those around them and their community.

Funding

We are constantly trying to improve how we work with relevant bodies such as Sport England and the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on shaping our projects and obtaining funding to continually improve our programmes, while taking them to more locations in the UK where the need is. We are working in partnership with the ECB to deliver large parts of their community youth disability work across the UK. But there is a question to ask about how much of an emphasis does the government currently put on funding of elite sport compared to the kind of grassroots sport and community programmes the Lord's Taverners delivers? Have we got the balance right?

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? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

Sport and physical activity should be treated just as importantly in the school curriculum as any other subject. Table cricket is the one programme we deliver which is currently very largely school based and is forming part of pupils' schedules in more schools every year through our work with county boards. It is one activity that anyone in any classroom can play and feel part of and has been a game changer for many young people at school living with a disability. Table cricket will soon be delivered in every county.

Wicketz and Super 1s are cricket programmes that are delivered outside of school at community hubs (although we target schools and pupils at them in areas where we deliver the programmes, some of which become hub venues). We know of numerous instances where participants of all three cricket programmes, who have initially not managed to fit in at school, or not reached their academic potential, see vast improvements in their schoolwork, physical

and mental health after finding a home on one of our programmes. The combination of playing sport with peers, and the increased confidence and self-esteem brought through making new friends, realising others are sharing similar experiences, feeling included and having a sense of belonging, has a positive knock-on effect on all aspects of participants lives. This goes beyond the sports arena and is felt in the classroom and in their home life.

During Covid it has become even more apparent that sport has played such a big role in physical and mental wellbeing, and the loss of our programmes in lockdown was significantly felt during long periods of the past 18 months. Participants and parents have been very vocal about what they missed and are now gaining once again since activity has returned.

After returning to activity in May 2021 we asked participants - Since returning to activity do you feel that being part of the projects has made you feel more:*

Included	94%
Confident	91%
Good about yourself	90%
Optimistic about the future	84%
Independent	83%
Able to Make Friends	84%

*Results are from 530 participants across Super 1s and Wicketz. Approximate population size is 2,400 for the two projects.

When asking Wicketz participants about the programme's impact on their health and activeness in May 2021:*

- 98% say they are more active because of Wicketz
- 89% say they are healthier due to Wicketz

Results are from 339 Wicketz participants.

As well as making sessions free, easy to access by choosing convenient venues and inclusive for everyone regardless of their abilities or disabilities, we look to be flexible with every hub we run and cater for the young people at each one by giving them a voice and ownership of activity. Our programmes lead with cricket, but we can add other sports to help maintain interest or to educate in a specific area. For example, a group of young Afghan refugees in Luton were identified as contributing to anti-social behaviour and community conflict. Many were disengaged from mainstream education, struggling with their mental health, at high risk of exploitation and on the fringe of crime. Wicketz set up Combat Cricket, a mix of martial arts and cricket, to help them integrate into their communities and gain self-respect. Through hard work and discipline their fitness, self-control, stress management and confidence improved. We saw better community interactions and improved personal outcomes, some even going into employment or education.

Many things can happen within a session - it might be tailored to focus on qualities like leadership as a starting point, or it might be more bespoke where we bring in a partner to do something that is harder hitting around employability or crime avoidance. When participants are fully engaged and integrated in their project, that is when we can educate them through life skills workshops on the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and how it benefits all aspects of your life.

A further success story across all of Table Cricket, Super 1s and Wicketz are competition days or local festivals where disadvantaged and disabled young people from across the country come together through playing sport and mix with young people from other communities, meeting new people and sharing their experiences.

A success that came about for us, particularly through our programmes for young people living with disabilities, is parental engagement. The longer that our Super 1s and Table Cricket have gone on, the more impact we have seen, not just on the individual, but on the wider community and in particular families and parents. We regularly hear parents telling us that our programmes and role models have allowed them to see what their child can achieve rather than what they cannot, that taking part is helping their young people realise their potential and as parents to see what is possible in all aspects of their child's life. In many disadvantaged communities we see a lot less parental engagement with huge challenges and barriers around this - it just emphasizes the need for community programmes like Wicketz.

Challenges

The number of girls taking part in sport and joining our programmes is constantly increasing but there's still a lot of work to do both across sport and in our programmes. We now have some bespoke girls Wicketz hubs, while Super 1s and Table Cricket see boys and girls living with disabilities playing in the same teams and enjoying sport at the same hubs. The culture at some sports clubs still fails to make girls feel welcome or as if they belong. The continued increase of role models in women's sport is resulting in significant improvements to that and the increase in female coaches also makes a huge difference in encouraging girls to stay in sport.

Accessibility and affordability is an issue everyone is tackling. We continue to do our best to find the most convenient venues for our programme sessions as mentioned above but there are still challenges in making sure underrepresented groups are given every chance to access sport and physical activity opportunities.

How can adults of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those from under-represented groups, including women and girls, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people, and those from less affluent backgrounds, be encouraged to lead more active lifestyles? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

Our work is with young people and disabled young adults. Of all the groups mentioned above, through our programmes we are trying to work with women and girls, ethnic minorities, disabled people and those from less affluent backgrounds and help them to take part in sport sessions on a weekly basis. Two key points:

The right staff - It is vital our staff have a level of understanding with the people they are working with, in particular young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or with a disability. Our Development Officers need to be as much youth, even social, workers as they are cricket coaches - to understand those young people, ask the right questions and build a strong level of trust and empathy is key.

Role models - As a society, we fall into the trap of thinking only of a professional sports person or someone very much in the public eye, when we think about role models. For us it is about finding a relatable role model, someone that can speak the language of that young person and has real life experience that they can relate too. With our disability cricket programmes, we use role models to showcase what you can do and not what you cannot. Often it is parents saying '*my child can't do this*' but if you show them someone despite their disability is doing that and is leading a really fulfilling life, that's a really powerful message which changes thinking. Equally in our disadvantaged programme we have had role models that have lived an early life of drugs and crime but have turned their life around and are now giving positive lifestyle messages and helping young people at risk of going down a similar path to redirect towards a much more positive direction in life. Having good role models is key to all our cricket programmes – we have had a number of participants join the programme at a young age who are now taking an active role as leaders in their respective groups and in their community and helping guide young people who are just joining our programmes.

The following video case study of Wicketz participant Uzair demonstrates this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAVGo56HwWA>

We would also like to see more schemes and drive to help young people to actually take the step into and develop as coaches. Similarly for volunteers to feel incentivized, trained and recognised for what they do. Finding suitable volunteers is a huge challenge for us and we feel if there were more schemes for volunteers to be recognised and that potentially lead to employment, it could make a big difference.

There are still steps to be taken in terms of just not focusing on elite sport but also sport at local community level – the value of sport for everyone. We can see the great impact through retention, for young people that take part in sport over a long period of time. We need to help creating that societal shift that when we think about sport, it is not just of winning World Cups or Olympic gold medals, but about the value of what sport offers as a whole, how it develops the whole person, and benefits the whole community.

Our 2020 impact report provides more information about the impact of our work and specific success stories - <https://www.lordstavernersimpact.com/>

Useful links

Further Lord's Taverners programme information:

Wicketz – www.lordstaverners.org/wicketz

Super 1s - www.lordstaverners.org/super1s

Table Cricket – www.lordstaverners.org/how-we-help/charitable-programmes/table-cricket/

Sports Kit Recycling – www.lordstaverners.org/sportskitrecycling

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