



Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee:- Participation in Sport in Disadvantaged Areas

StreetGames Submission: 18th March 2022

StreetGames welcomes the opportunity to provide its views on the above inquiry, and would welcome the opportunity to discuss our written evidence, and supplementary insight reports further.

Introduction

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

Launched in 2007, StreetGames champions and supports a network of over 1,400 locally trusted organisations (LTOs) including over 150 in Wales that provide access to sport, physical activity and volunteering to children, young people and families in the most disadvantaged 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 activities and support, 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 communities.

StreetGames has been a National Partner to Sport Wales since 2015, and supports the Vision for Sport in Wales. We have also worked alongside Welsh Government on a number of funded programmes including Communities First, Calls for Action, Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing. We pro-actively work in partnership with Sport Wales, other National Partners and National Governing Bodies of Sport to champion the needs of young people living in disadvantaged communities to participate in sport and physical activity, and to provide support, guidance and expertise to improve practice locally and nationally. Our ambitious new [10 Year strategy](#), “*Active for Today and Tomorrow*” launched earlier this year, sets out our ambition to expand Doorstep Sport provision throughout the country and grow opportunities for young people in disadvantaged communities to participate in sport.

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.



1. What are the main barriers to participation in sport in disadvantaged areas? How do these intersect with other factors including; age, sex & gender, socio-economic status, geography, disability and ethnicity

There are a range of barriers which impact an individual's ability to take part in sport. For those living in disadvantaged areas these barriers typically span: **individual factors** (such as a lack of confidence, a lack of time and peer influence), aspects relating to the **family situation** (such as a lack of money or transport) and also, most significantly barriers relating to the **local area/environment**. In disadvantaged areas there is often a lack of sports facilities, sports clubs and volunteers. Young people we speak to have told us time and time again, that: 'there's nothing available near me', 'It's too expensive', 'I don't have the right kit or equipment', that traditional sports sessions can 'feel too formal...I don't fit in' or that they 'don't feel safe at night getting there'.

To guide our work we regularly undertake research and talk to young people living in disadvantaged communities to better understand their lives, the challenges and barriers they face and the factors that what would help them to take part in sport more often. To read more on what we hear, see:

- Findings from a Youth Voice exercise undertaken with [young people](#) living in disadvantaged communities last year.
- A research [report](#) commissioned by StreetGames, that was undertaken by the London School of Economics Housing & Communities Research Team to explore Poverty & Sport.
- Research findings relating to [young people's 'pathways'](#) into and out of sport undertaken in partnership with youth research specialists 2CV.

The key audience for StreetGames is young people living in disadvantaged communities and therefore we have focused our response to this consultation on this audience. Within this audience, it naturally also involves working with: females, young people from ethnically diverse communities and young people with a disability. For these groups the barriers identified above also apply together with some additional challenges, which can exist, for example in relation to: cultural/religious aspects and 'norms', fear of 'judgement' and access. All of which emphasise the need for community coaches and leaders to have a strong understand of the specific audience they are looking to engage; the potential barriers they face and how sporting offers can be tailored or adapted to aid inclusion.



2. How clear a picture do we have of current participation levels in disadvantaged areas? Does the current data enable policy interventions to be effective?

Sport Wales lead on a range of national surveys which provide key data in relation to sports participation rates amongst both children and adults, including: the [School Sport Survey](#), [National Survey for Wales](#) and most recently data captured via [Savanta Comres](#) during the Pandemic.

Published reports from Sport Wales of these surveys include useful analysis of some data sets by local authority area, gender, ethnicity and disability and within the School Sports Survey some analysis by Free School Meal quartile which acts as a 'proxy' for household income/socio-economic group (SEG).

As such, there is some understanding from these surveys re participation levels in disadvantaged areas. However, it would be even better if those working within the sector were able to access and analyse the data captured from these surveys in more depth. For example, data captured via similar surveys in England can be analysed using a simple [Active Lives](#) on-line tool that enables the user to cross-tabulate all survey data by a range of different variables, for example including: socio-economic status, work status, family affluence, free school meal and some by IMD decile. In turn, this enables all of the key indicators included in the Active Lives Survey to be analysed by key demographic characteristics, meaning that any sporting inequalities can be clearly identified in similar way to health inequalities.

To understand participation levels and effectiveness of policy interventions, it is also important to undertake qualitative research in order to capture the lived experiences of communities and individuals which help to bring understanding and depth to the quantitative data captured via national surveys (*see links to reports highlighted in Question 1 above*). Increasingly we are supporting young people to act as Peer Researchers and undertake research with other young people within their local community and use their findings to develop social action projects and access funding. See a recent example [here](#)

3. How should public funding be used to increase participation in disadvantaged areas?

In order to increase participation in disadvantaged areas, we would recommend that public funding be used in the following ways:

- That public funding is targeted into place (*using proportionate universalism to ensure that public funding is targeted to places where levels of poverty and deprivation are highest*)
- The use of asset-based approaches that build upon existing assets within local areas (*i.e. developing the local workforce & volunteers, institutions & associations, existing buildings & open spaces and connections*) rather than taking resources into an area from elsewhere.
- The need for long-term investment (i.e. 5-10+ years), which allows enough time for change to take place and for local assets to be developed. Rather than short-term 1-2 year funding initiatives.
- The need to replicate investment where things are known to 'work' - so whilst innovation is important, investment should not always be channelled into new schemes or new projects, but instead follow the policy cycle: '*insight, innovate, evaluate, mainstream*'.





4. How effective are current interventions at increasing participation in disadvantaged areas?

In our experience, interventions which are most effective at increasing participation in disadvantaged areas are those which take a very localised approach; are owned and driven by local people and local providers – with ‘*boots on the ground*’ and where there is support for these local providers, in terms of: workforce and volunteer development, organisational sustainability, collaboration and advocacy.

At StreetGames we work with locally trusted organisations and promote a [Doorstep sport](#) approach, which has been shown to be an effective way of engaging young people in disadvantaged areas in sport.

Doorstep Sport is about providing sports activities on the doorstep of local communities within disadvantaged areas – it is built upon the ‘5 Rights’, which in essence are about ensuring availability of affordable, accessible and supported sports activities. The Five Rights comprise:

- The **right place**: For young people living in disadvantaged areas, their world is often limited by numerous aspects of everyday life. For many, this can mean that their horizons are limited at a geographical level, with limited travel outside their immediate locale. This emphasises the importance of providing local opportunities - within their subjective neighbourhood, usually within one mile of their homes. The venues they attend will be locations that are trusted by those being targeted and are likely to be community facilities such as parks, open spaces, community halls, youth centres, MUGAs and even car parks – taking sport to the metaphoric doorstep of the target group rather than expecting people to travel outside their area.
- The **right price**: finances amongst disadvantaged young people are typically limited. It is therefore, essential that sporting offers for this group are low cost or free e.g. around £1 per session. Price is not the only barrier, but lower socio-economic groups /low-income communities and families need subsidised provision to start and maintain the active habit. A strategy that asks activity to compete for the household pound does not work well amongst Lower Socio Economic Groupss. Data from the Expenditure and Food Survey, which was analysed by SIRC at Sheffield Hallam University on behalf of StreetGames showing that low-income households (bottom 20%) spend just [£3.75 per week on active sports](#) (compared to over £12.67 for an average income household). This is not enough to maintain the active habit via either traditional sports clubs, leisure centres or via commercial offers: subsidised provision is essential.
- The **right time**: at a time which suits the participants (often evenings including Fridays and Saturdays) rather than holding activities on a Saturday or Sunday morning just because this has always been the traditional coaching slot. There are numerous examples of Doorstep Sport Clubs which successfully ‘take over’ leisure centres on Friday nights for youth provision with the double benefit of meeting the needs of young people whilst also utilising leisure centre spaces at a time when there is often little demand from other customers.
- The **right style**: Everyday activities for this target group tend to revolve around maintaining relationships and hanging out in social groups. When teenagers and young adults are tempted into sport/physical activity they want it to be part of their social lives - not unlike





listening to music, going shopping or 'hanging out' with their friends. They want their sport to be friendly and informal, varied and vibrant and want a say in what goes on at their activities. Young people are far more likely to try new activities with their friends and based on personal recommendation. Therefore, Doorstep Sport is designed for friendship groups to enjoy together.

- The 'style' will also be tailored to meet the needs of the disadvantaged young people being targeted. For example, when looking to engage previously inactive young people the offer may provide more of a holistic approach and may not immediately introduce a sport/physical activity element – as per our Us Girls Alive offer. By comparison, a 'classic' doorstep sport multi-sport offer is likely to be effective at engaging disadvantaged young people who are 'fairly active' or 'active' but lack the opportunity to take part in sport/physical activity outside the education setting. Whilst CLUB1 and Pop Up activities have been introduced as a way of encouraging young people to try new activities, go to new settings and be active independently as an effective means of encouraging 'fairly active' young people to be more active.
- The **right people**: The more local the leader the better. Certainly, leaders must understand life in disadvantaged areas and be on the young person's side. They must be able to empathise and want to develop the whole person and be prepared to encourage autonomy amongst participants. The leader can often become a very important person to teenage participants. For some, more technically minded, sports coaches this is alien to them and not something they want to or feel confident doing.

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/physical activity. It is not enough to purely 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 (over 80% of participants in doorstep sport find out about activity through word-of-mouth).

Conversely, providing a really attractive and supported offer at a high price is likely to fail. This is why LTOs are vitally important - they are involved in a good quality conversation with their neighbourhood and so understand what is 'right' for their local community; they know the area, know the people, know other local organisations and most importantly are embedded and trusted by the community.

Through funding from a range of partners (including Welsh Government, Sport Wales, local Trusts and Commercial Partners) StreetGames has led many different interventions in partnership with LTOs in our network that have successfully enabled young people and their families living in disadvantaged areas to engage in sport. Examples include: [Doorstep Sport Clubs](#), our award winning [Us Girls](#) work, and the Families Engagement Project [here](#) .





5. Has the pandemic caused any persistent changes to participation levels in disadvantaged areas?

It is widely acknowledged, that those in disadvantaged areas have felt the impact of the pandemic and lockdowns more acutely than more affluent areas. This is true both economically and in terms of mental and physical wellbeing – with higher infection and death rates in more disadvantaged areas and those in lower-paid jobs being more likely to have been furloughed or made unemployed.

In 2020 StreetGames undertook research with LTOs and young people in our network to explore the impact of the pandemic - see Coronavirus Report [here](#). The findings showed: an increase in loneliness, a deterioration in mental health and well-being, severe financial pressure, increased family breakdown and that young people and their families were struggling to stay active.

Building upon this, we undertook further research during [2021](#) with young people living in disadvantaged areas and found that whilst many young people are now keen to get back to sport/exercise, some have lost confidence and fitness, some are fearful of social situations and of the virus itself. Plus facility closures and activity price rises are making it more and more difficult for some young people in disadvantaged areas to take part in sport.

The Savanta Comres research commissioned by Sport Wales during the pandemic in 2020-21 also showed that activity levels declined during the period and that adults from lower socio-economic groups were more likely to report that they (and their children) were doing less activity than they were before the pandemic.

It is likely that the effects of the pandemic will be felt for a long time after case rates fall and the final restrictions are lifted and with household budgets being tightly squeezed by rising inflation, low-income families are likely to struggle to afford the costs of regular sport/exercise at a time when it is most needed.

For further information related to this question, see our report [here](#) – which considers the impact of the pandemic on sport and physical activity, its likely effect on widening inequalities and considerations for providers.





6. How effectively do different sectors (e.g. education and health) collaborate to improve participation in sport in disadvantaged areas?

Over recent years there has been growing recognition of the role that sport can play and that by increasing sports participation and reducing sporting inequalities, it is also possible to impact on wider social outcomes, such as improved mental health/well-being, community cohesion, community safety and educational attainment.

In turn, this has also led to increased collaboration and investment between different sectors. At StreetGames we have found over the past five years that a significant proportion of investment into LTOs in our network comes from non-sporting sectors – see examples below:

Healthy and Active Fund – Family Engagement Project: StreetGames has been working in partnership with a consortium of over 30 partners to deliver the Family Engagement Project since 2019. This partnership is funded by the jointly delivered Healthy and Active Fund (***Sport Wales, Public Health Wales and Natural Resources Wales***). This partnership has seen the development of 7 locally driven, area-based partnerships, to support families to be active together. This partnership sees a range of sectors working collaboratively, to meet the needs of local people, including Local Health Boards, Local Authorities, National Governing Bodies, Housing Associations, Local Schools, Youth Settings, Leisure Trusts and Sports Clubs. More information and the latest case studies can be found here [FEP August 2020 \(squarespace.com\)](#) and here [New case studies show power of sport to bring families together | StreetGames](#)

Education Sector: Family Engagement Project in Newport – County in the Community, Newport Live and StreetGames have worked in partnership across Newport, working with primary schools in the most disadvantaged communities across the City. [FEP - Newport \(squarespace.com\)](#) Working in partnership with school-based Family Engagement Officers, has enabled access to families who are most in need. This has been increasingly important throughout the pandemic, but it has enabled the project to engage with families that have stated that they would not have engaged in sport/physical activity offers without this support. This bespoke support has upskilled families to be active as a family unit at home, in their local area, and has supported them to use their local facilities.

Youth Sector: StreetGames works closely with the Youth Sector, to support the development and delivery of Doorstep Sport within a variety of local Youth Club settings, but also in partnership with CWVYS (the Council for Wales Voluntary Youth Services), the independent representative body for the voluntary youth work sector in Wales. This partnership enables the doorstep sport methodology to be embedded across a number of youth work settings, in particular working with Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales, Merthyr Youth Service, Powys Youth Service, Cardiff Youth Service and individual youth settings across a number of Local Authority areas.

Housing Association Sector: StreetGames works closely with a number of housing associations, to support access to sport and physical activity for residents. This is done in a number of ways, including leveraging additional funding to support local projects, support to collect local insight from residents and the provision of training to upskill both staff and residents. Good examples include working in partnership across Newport to deliver the Fit and Fed campaign; working across Merthyr to help families access bespoke sporting offers [FEP - Merthyr \(squarespace.com\)](#), and working in partnership with Wales and West Housing to support local Doorstep Sport projects





SEWSCAP and SEWH – Corporate Partnership within Construction sector: StreetGames has been working with [SEWSCAP](#) and [SEWH](#) to support the delivery of high-quality social value projects as part of the collaborative construction frameworks. The partnership has seen over £90,000 invested into local community organisations to deliver high quality sport and physical activity interventions, utilising the Doorstep Sport methodology. These interventions include delivering training for staff, volunteers and young people, supporting young people to conduct their own research to develop their own social action projects, and delivery of home activity packs during the lockdown restrictions of the pandemic. The latest partnership has seen a further investment of circa £80,000 for female focused social action projects that will increase young females’ sport and physical activity levels, develop young leaders and improve local facilities. [Welsh youth face down Dragons to secure new sporting opportunities for women and girls | StreetGames](#)

Whilst all of the above examples are positive indications of cross-policy and cross-sector working, StreetGames believe this could go further and that there could be more opportunities for sport to be considered as an effective approach to delivering outcomes within other policy areas.

7. Are there examples of best practice, both within Wales and internationally, that Wales should learn from to increase participation in sport in disadvantaged areas?

Other best practice examples which we would like to highlight include:

- StreetGames led the development of 1000 [Doorstep Sport Clubs](#) in England, funded by Sport England lottery, which engaged over 120,000 young people from disadvantaged areas in sport.
- **MOVEment Spaces:** An international collaboration around transforming places to become active places – see here for more information [MOVEment Spaces \(isca.org\)](#). One example from this work included StreetGames providing a shipping container in a part of Birmingham, that young people essentially took over, designed and managed to reduce anti-social behaviour and provided a hub to access sports equipment, training and doorstep sport sessions.
- **Safer Together Through Sport:** StreetGames has developed a range of approaches to delivering doorstep sport in a way that reduces anti-social behaviour and plays a preventative role in reducing serious youth violence. Working with Police & Crime Commissioners and more recently, a number of the Violence Reduction Units in England, we have developed training, resources and evidence that help LTOs to support young people to be more pro-social. Our work has been evaluated by Loughborough University and has been used as the basis for the National PCC Board for Sport (of which the Wales PCCs are members). For more information see [here](#).

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