

# Sport for Social Good

Revisiting *More Than a Game*

A policy paper by the Centre for Social Justice

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THE CENTRE FOR  
SOCIAL  
JUSTICE

## Introduction

Sport and physical activity have the potential to transform lives and engage those who are trapped in poverty, especially young people. Through training, teamwork, exercise and commitment, sport can help make an enormous difference to those who are stuck in a rut, and give them the skills, hope and experiences needed to turn a corner.

A year before the London 2012 Olympic Games, the Centre for Social Justice published *More Than a Game* which looked at how sports policy is being delivered in the UK and questioned whether enough was being done to harness sport's potential to transform disadvantaged communities.

According to the latest figures an average of 25.9 per cent of people in the lowest socio-economic group take part in sport once a week, compared to 42.7 per cent in the highest socio-economic group.<sup>1</sup>

This short paper argues that the Government must develop a comprehensive national strategy to make sport a vehicle for social good and use it to help improve people's lives and communities.

This strategy must set out a new set of priorities for investment in sport – one which places social transformation at its heart.

In order to achieve this there must be stronger inter-departmental working to ensure that sport policy is used to help the most disadvantaged.

The CSJ has seen some excellent examples of organisations delivering models of best practice in helping disadvantaged communities to access and make the most of sport. These are projects that can inspire the way for new practice across the country.

## How sport can transform lives

*More Than a Game* showed how physical activity has the potential to make a profound and positive impact on individuals and communities, especially in the most deprived areas. In particular the CSJ found that it can have an impact on:

### Education

- The participation of underachieving young people in sport has been found to have a positive impact on educational development. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) found that underachieving young people participating in extra-curricular activities linked to sport could increase their numeracy skills, on average, by 29 per cent above those who did not participate in sport.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sport England, *Active People Survey 8* [accessed via [https://www.sportengland.org/media/650218/1x30\\_overall\\_factsheet\\_aps8.pdf](https://www.sportengland.org/media/650218/1x30_overall_factsheet_aps8.pdf) (20/03/15)]

<sup>2</sup> The Culture and Sport Evidence Programme (CASE), *Understanding the drivers, impact and value of engagement in culture and sport*, London: DCMS, 2010 p27 [accessed via [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/71231/CASE-supersummaryFINAL-19-July2010.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/71231/CASE-supersummaryFINAL-19-July2010.pdf) (20/03/15)]

## Behaviour

- Effective programmes that encourage participation in physical activities also have the potential to tackle ingrained anti-social behaviour; for instance the Premier League's 'Kicks' programme which aims to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in crime hotspots through sport and development sessions. The project has seen a reduction of up to 60 per cent in anti-social behaviour in areas it operates in.<sup>3</sup> Seven out of ten parents and their teenagers say that anti-social and criminal behaviour is linked directly to boredom.<sup>4</sup> Physical activity can help rehabilitate offenders back into society as well as reduce youth crime and enhance social cohesion.

### Case Study: The Boxing Academy

The Boxing Academy in Hackney offers support for young people who are at risk of educational exclusion, placing them in a class of six students with a dedicated boxer who acts as mentor, teacher support and coach.

It uses the beneficial effects of sport to empower students between the ages of 13 and 16, to teach them to manage their anger, give them confidence in their learning and direct them towards further education, training or employment.

*'I'm a different person now. Before I was hanging around with the wrong people and always getting into fights. I never paid attention at school. I didn't understand what was being taught in class.'*

Dylan, 2012 leaver

*'For many years this organisation has made a valuable contribution to the lives of young people in my constituency. It has provided a safe and supportive space for young people to pursue academic, physical and emotional success. The Boxing Academy can be credited with complete positive transformations in the lives of many young people in London.'*

David Lammy, MP for Tottenham

## Employment

- Physical activity can also boost employability. Participation in any sport is associated with an 11 per cent increase in the likelihood of having looked for a job in the last four weeks, among people who are unemployed.<sup>5</sup>
- Physical activity is known to release chemicals in the body that have the effect of increasing energy levels and feelings of positivity, which consequently increase motivation levels and productivity. These factors are crucial when searching and applying for work.

3 Premier League 'Kicks' campaign [accessed via <http://www.premierleague.com/en-gb/communities/2011-12/kicks/> (20/03/15)]

4 4Children, Make Space Youth Review, Transforming the offer for young people in the UK, London: 4Children, 2007 p77 [accessed via: [http://www.4children.org.uk/Files/ccc656ef-6026-4759-bc56-9f4b0103fe1c/YouthReview\\_Report\\_Low.pdf](http://www.4children.org.uk/Files/ccc656ef-6026-4759-bc56-9f4b0103fe1c/YouthReview_Report_Low.pdf) (20/03/15)]

5 Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Quantifying the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport*, London: DCMS, 2014 p24 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/304896/Quantifying\\_the\\_Social\\_Impacts\\_of\\_Culture\\_and\\_Sport.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/304896/Quantifying_the_Social_Impacts_of_Culture_and_Sport.pdf) (20/03/15)]

## Case Study: Greenhouse Sports

Greenhouse Sports works in inner-city London schools to give opportunities to young people in disadvantaged communities through the provision of high quality sports programmes.

It provides sports programmes that nurture social, thinking, emotional and physical skills that equip young people for life.

By working full time in schools and in the community Greenhouse coaches develop strong relationships with young people, helping them to improve their health and fitness whilst mentoring them to improve their engagement with their education and community.

Ade, a Year 10 pupil, has been helped by the Greenhouse Sports basketball programme. His coach Michael said:

*'Many had written [Ade] off due to his negative behaviour, but over the last two years he has turned himself around, winning teachers over with his pleasant attitude and, more importantly, with the respect he now shows the teaching staff. I am proud of the achievements Ade has made, as his journey has been a difficult one. He has never given up, constantly tries to better himself, and has become a positive role model for the younger students.'*

## Health

- Participation in sport and physical activity results in a variety of health benefits, yet households with the lowest incomes are the least active,<sup>6</sup> and have the highest obesity rates.<sup>7</sup>
- The savings to the public purse of encouraging sport among the most disadvantaged are significant. Physical inactivity among today's young people is estimated to cost £53.3 billion during their lifetimes, through a costly burden of diseases related to inactivity and lower quality of life, and life expectancy.<sup>8</sup> For each inactive young person who takes up sport to recommended levels, there is an estimated £40,100 saving in healthcare costs over their lifetime.<sup>9</sup> An increase of ten per cent in those children and young people attaining the recommended levels of physical activity could reduce the cost of physical inactivity by around £8 billion over the course of the lives of today's 11 to 25 year olds.<sup>10</sup>

6 StreetGames and Centre for Economics and Business Research, *The Inactivity Time Bomb: The economic cost of physical inactivity in young people*, London: StreetGames/Cebr 2014 p15 [accessed via: <http://www.streetgames.org/www/sites/default/files/The-Inactivity-TimeBomb-StreetGames-Cebr-report-April-2014.pdf> (20/03/15)]

7 The Health and Social Care Information Centre, *Health Survey for England 2013*, Leeds: hscic, 2014, chapter 10 p22 and chapter 11 p19 [accessed via: <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB16076/HSE2013-Ch10-Adult-anth-meas.pdf> and <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB16076/HSE2013-Ch11-Child-BMI.pdf> (20/03/15)]

8 Young people refers to those aged 11–25. StreetGames and Centre for Economics and Business Research, *The Inactivity Time Bomb: The economic cost of physical inactivity in young people*, London: 2014 p7 [accessed via: <http://www.streetgames.org/www/sites/default/files/The-Inactivity-TimeBomb-StreetGames-Cebr-report-April-2014.pdf> (20/03/15)]

9 Ibid p25

10 Ibid p8

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: A new National Strategy – sport for social good

Sport England's main goal is to increase the number of people playing a certain amount of sport, and most of the 46 National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs) have participation targets based on the number of people playing their sport at least once a week.<sup>11</sup> Yet there is no targeted sports strategy to ensure the most disadvantaged reap rewards.

The Government should create a new national strategy setting out a detailed plan to encourage sport for social good and encompassing Sport England, local government, and community-based organisations.

This strategy would succeed Sport England's 2012–2017 Youth and Community Strategy, the core aim of which is to secure a year-on-year increase in the proportion of people playing sport once a week for 30 minutes.

The Government's new strategy needs to include a viable approach to evaluating the impact of physical activity in order to evidence how disadvantaged people's lives are being positively changed.

### Recommendation 2: Better accountability among sport's National Governing Bodies

While most NGBs are given funding towards increasing grassroots participation, they do not have to justify how those funds will be spent on deprived communities in order to receive it.

In response to a CSJ Freedom of Information request, Sport England stated:

*'Sport England invests in National Governing Bodies to get more people playing sport in England regularly. It does not require NGBs to give a percentage or amount showing how much of its funding will be specifically allocated to increasing sports participation among disadvantaged people.'*<sup>12</sup>

NGBs are only accountable to Sport England for increased participation in their sport. There are efforts to ensure participation is taken up by the neediest, such as the Rugby Football Union's 'Try for Change' programme, which has been recently launched to grow rugby as a tool for social good, by bringing together and supporting leading rugby charities.<sup>13</sup> However NGBs have no incentive to ensure participation is taken up by the most disadvantaged, and that sport is used for social good.

11 Most funded NGBs have 2013–17 participation targets based on once a week participation and their current performance is judged against an Active People Survey 6 baseline. The Active People Survey, which surveys the number of people who play sport once a week for 30 minutes, provides the data for these key outcomes. [accessed via: [https://www.sportengland.org/media/645773/weekly\\_table\\_sport\\_aps8q4\\_16plus.xlsx](https://www.sportengland.org/media/645773/weekly_table_sport_aps8q4_16plus.xlsx) and <https://www.sportengland.org/media/116626/Agreed-NGB-WSP-targets-1-.pdf> and <https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/national-work/national-governing-bodies/> (20/03/15)]

12 Freedom of Information Reply, Sport England, 11 March 2015

13 Rugby Football Union, Press Release, *RFU and O2 launch Try for Change*, 13 March 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.englandrugby.com/news/rfu-and-lanch-try-for-change/> (15/03/2015)]

Some sports have a particularly low level of participation among the poorest people, despite the NGB receiving large amounts of funding from Sport England.<sup>14</sup> The Lawn Tennis Association was given a two-year investment reward in January 2015 for putting increasing participation at the heart of its strategy,<sup>15</sup> yet fewer than 13 per cent of tennis participants are from the lowest socio-economic background.<sup>16</sup>

### Recommendation 3: Political ownership for sport in government

If sport is to fulfil its potential for improving lives, the national ownership of sport and how it positively impacts people's lives requires better working across government.

Currently, while there is a structure for sport-specific policy overseen by the DCMS, there is a lack of genuine and identifiable cross-departmental political ownership.

We believe the DCMS should continue to contain the sport brief, but that the Minister for Sport should be a more elevated position within government in order to drive the agenda more successfully. It would be crucial for this position to work closely in partnership with Sport England to deliver as co-ordinated an approach as possible and, therefore, increasing its reach, strength and have a longer lasting impact.

This role must also involve clearly defined departmental cooperation between the Department for Education, the DCMS and the Department of Health to ensure that the sport for social good strategy is being followed.

### Recommendation 4: Better access to sporting facilities among disadvantaged communities

Facilities are not accessible enough, and this inability to access facilities is a major problem according to the most recent major national independent inquiry on community sports facilities. The Facilities Inquiry's panel concluded that community sports facilities were not in good enough condition, and in some cases were not even available for use.<sup>17</sup> This lack of accessibility is a problem for clubs, local communities and individuals. It can be financial, geographical and/or related to availability.<sup>18</sup> The trend for publicly managed facilities to be transferred to leisure trusts also potentially threatens the ability of low-income groups to participate in sport.<sup>19</sup>

14 The Lawn Tennis Association received a revenue grant of more than £4 million from Sport England between September 2013 and December 2014. Lawn Tennis Association, *British Tennis in Review, Annual Report and Accounts 2014*, Lawn Tennis Association: London, 2014 p31 [accessed via: <http://www.lta.org.uk/globalassets/about-lta/british-tennis-annual-report-and-accounts-2014.pdf> (23/03/2015)]

15 Sport England, Press release, *Major progress for tennis, table tennis and fencing*, 29 January 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.sportengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/january/29/improvements-net-rewards-for-tennis-table-tennis-and-fencing/> (15/03/2015)]

16 Statistic compiled from two separate sources. Active People Survey 8, Once a week participation table by individual sport [accessed via: [http://www.sportengland.org/media/645773/weekly\\_table\\_sport\\_aps8q4\\_16plus.xlsx](http://www.sportengland.org/media/645773/weekly_table_sport_aps8q4_16plus.xlsx)] and information provided privately to CSJ by Sport England in February 2015

17 Facilities Inquiry, *Report and Recommendations*, 2010, London: Facilities Inquiry p9 [accessed via: [http://www.facilitiesinquiry.org.uk/Resources/Facilities%20Inquiry/Facilities\\_Inquiry\\_Report.pdf](http://www.facilitiesinquiry.org.uk/Resources/Facilities%20Inquiry/Facilities_Inquiry_Report.pdf) (20/03/2015)]

18 Centre for Social Justice, *More Than a Game, Harnessing the power of sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people*, London: CSJ, 2011 p.18 [accessed via: [http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/20110523\\_CSJ\\_More\\_than\\_a\\_Game\\_web.pdf](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/20110523_CSJ_More_than_a_Game_web.pdf) (20/03/15)]

19 Ibid

Just as local authorities have a statutory responsibility to consult Sport England on any applications to sell off playing fields, so they should have to consult them on any proposals to sell leisure centres, indoor sports halls or artificial football pitches.

We recommend that Sport England become a Statutory Consultee on such planning applications.

We also recommend the Government commissions an updated independent inquiry into the state of community and educational sports facilities.

In order to address issues of accessibility due to cost and location for users, 'Doorstep Sport' should also be encouraged and receive an increase in profile in order to facilitate an increase in impact.

### Case Study: StreetGames

StreetGames is a national charity which develops 'Doorstep Sport' in disadvantaged communities and advocates that sport is a catalyst for social change in such communities. 'Doorstep Sport' takes projects and activities to communities by utilising any available space such as car parks, estates and parks.

StreetGames has received considerable investment from Sport England. As of the summer of 2014 StreetGames had established 307 'Doorstep Sport Clubs' engaging over 118,000 young people in disadvantaged communities. This continued success led Sport England to commit to further investment with the aim of increasing the number of clubs by another 700 by 2017.

## Recommendation 5: Using sports coaching to transform lives

The potential impact of effective coaching on the lives and futures of participants is significant. Sports coaches can make a large contribution to improving the lives of disadvantaged young people.

Coaches should be given the tools to promote and develop greater self-confidence, independence and self-efficacy as part of their coaching badges.

The time and financial commitments required for those undertaking coaching badges can be prohibitive. Unless a coach reaches the elite level of coaching, the financial rewards are not particularly enticing.

A review of these factors and alternative pathways for accessing relevant training needs to be done in order to encourage more people to look at coaching as a viable career option.

Sport England should look to pilot a Community Coaching Scheme for those working in local communities. The scheme would be for those teaching multiple sports, rather than individual sports, and would facilitate coaches to engage in disadvantaged areas.

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