StreetGames Community Research

December 2017

Background

StreetGames helps organisations across the UK to take sport and activity to the doorstep in disadvantaged communities.

- Organisations that are particularly trusted by, and embedded in, their communities can do a huge amount of good.

- The focus of this research is *how* do these community organisations become trusted by, and embedded in, their communities? The research took this question directly to seven community organisations that *are* considered to be trusted / embedded already, to find out how they do it.

- The research also explored whether organisations were keen to *increase* the sport or activity they currently offer, and what StreetGames could do to help them do this.

- In addition, the research covered finances and sustainability – how are these organisations funded, and how sustainable are they?

What we did

IFF Research conducted in-depth telephone interviews with the leader of seven organisations, and then conducted full-day site visits with six of these projects (one project was unable to facilitate a site visit).

The site visits were intended to understand the organisation from as many different angles as possible – from the point of view of staff, volunteers, the people from the community who use the space, and anyone else involved.

Interviews and Site Visits were conducted during October and November 2017.

> Throughout these slides, details in grey boxes are observations from site visits

> Details in pink boxes are anecdotes or examples from site visits

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What makes organisations trusted / embedded?

- Summary of findings
- The fundamentals of being trusted
- Further key factors that create trust
- Longer term considerations

Summary: What makes organisations trusted / embedded?

FUNDAMENTALS

1. Personal qualities of founders & leaders
A sheer commitment and passion to continue no matter what, and be 'the glue' that brings together all the separate parts of the organisation

2. Time
Becoming 'embedded' is generally a slow process, requiring persistence and patience

KEY FACTORS

1. Being accessible/familiar
So that participants feel the organisation is run by people like them, or at least people they know

2. Being consistent
Always doing what you say you'll do

3. Understanding needs of community
Providing activities which suit the needs of the people who live locally

4. Good quality equipment & coaching
Making the environment appealing & signalling you value participants

5. Encourage respect and good behaviour
Openness, fairness & equal opportunities for all

LONGER TERM

1. Handing back to the community
Encouraging participants to run their own sessions and take more control

2. Partnership working
Having strong relationships across organisations brings the community together & helps make projects more sustainable

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The Fundamentals of being trusted

1. Personal qualities of foundress / leaders
2. Time

Fundamental to an organisation becoming embedded is 1. the **personal qualities** of the leaders, and 2. the **time** that needs to be invested into it

Personal qualities: motivation, energy, determination

- Given how much time it can take to get sessions and projects successfully embedded and trusted, a determined and energetic personality within the organisation was important

- In addition, running these organisations involves making (or attempting) links with other organisations, applying for funding, and 'getting out there' into the community, and not always succeeding. This requires an enthusiasm, tenacity and resilience – qualities that were evident in the leaders all of the projects that we spoke to

Time

- Becoming embedded can be a long process. The organisations we spoke to generally had at least 10 years experience and commented that getting new coaches and new sessions trusted by the community could take at least a year

This varied between projects. One felt the project became trusted sooner – within 3 years. They were responding to an immediate need in the community.

This was backed up by the site visits – the energy and resilience of the leaders, and key people 'on the ground', was obvious. Another essential quality was a genuine empathy, warmth and kindness towards those in the community.

[the leader/founder] is the Grandmaster here – he pulls the strings and keeps everything working. I don't know what we would do without him.
- **Coach, Black Country**

# The site visits revealed the authenticity, passion and warmth of **key individuals**

- A real affection and warmth for the people who use the facilities
- Genuinely know the people and their families that use the facilities
- Friendly, open and warm
- Not treated as a 9-to-5 job: always thinking about how to make it better, what else they can do. Very generous with their time and energy

This isn't a job, it's a vocation. The kids that have left and gone to Uni, they still WhatsApp me. They know I'm there, and I always will be.
- **Youth leader, London**

For some working on the ground (coaches and volunteers), the shared life experiences or culture they have with participants is really key:

- Staff and volunteers working with homeless people in one project had been homeless / had similar experiences
- Volunteers running Iraqi and Somali women's groups are necessarily part of that community
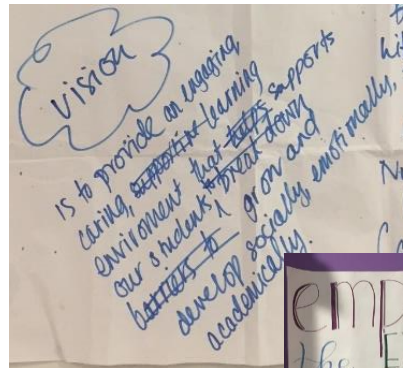
We observed a project leader in London who called to one of the young people who had just finished a class, to come and collect a certificate for his mum, from the office.

Posters in the main office in London showed a passion and warmth
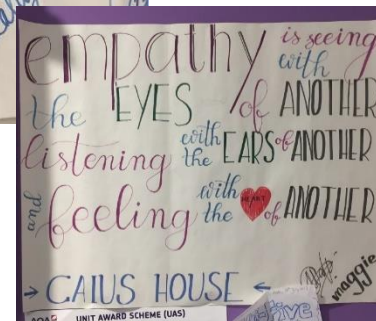
They [the founders] are 100% committed, if it could be more it would. They are both brilliant and I am scared what would happen to this if they weren't here.
- **Parent, Black Country**

It often does take a large amount of **time** to become trusted/embedded, however this varies

Some become trusted more quickly; others still feel like they are struggling after a long time

Three projects felt they were trusted / embedded, and that was a long, gradual process. These are very established – 15 years plus.

One felt they were trusted / embedded already, and had become so quickly. This project was responding to an urgent existing need: there was no organised football nearby, or a welcoming place to play it.

Once this was provided, word of mouth created a large following quite swiftly.

Parents were initially a little cautious because they did not know the two leaders running the sessions, but were reassured after a few sessions.

One other was more established but felt it was struggling to become 'trusted', particularly by the parents of the community. Parents remembered 'misbehaving' when they themselves were at the centre when they were young, and it has a reputation for trouble amongst some. The project has changed a lot but feels it is difficult to 'undo' the negative associations.

One other found that despite their high quality / varied facilities / huge space, they are finding it difficult to become truly known in the community. They are mainly fed by one particular school and struggle to bring young people in beyond that. Previously, when the project was in a different location, a different school 'fed' them, but this school now does not attend the new location.

More established ⟷ *Less established*

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Further key factors that create trust

1. Being accessible / familiar
2. Being consistent
3. Understanding the needs of the community
4. Good quality equipment and coaching
5. Encourage respect and good behaviour

1. Being **accessible** and **familiar** to the local community is a key factor in becoming trusted/embedded

Being visible / providing familiar coaches

- A few leaders said they just needed to be physically out in the community – walking the streets, giving out flyers, helping out in a local café
- This ensures people know your face and are comfortable in your presence
- For participants, ensuring that any new coaches/volunteers consistently led the same sessions (and created a fun, 'banter' filled environment) was important

Identifying and engaging locals to be actively involved in delivering sessions

- Local mums, dads and teachers can make sessions (active or not) feel accessible for other locals, and they can do excellent work recruiting / encouraging others.
- For some hard to reach communities, having members involved is essential e.g. Iraqi women's groups

Identifying and engaging the 'influencers' and 'big characters' in the community

- Getting these people on-side, and on your side, means you and your organisation becomes more accessible to those who might not otherwise trust you

I'm on their level [the participants], I see them around and speak to them. I'm the same age as a few of them and even went to school with some of them.
-Coach, Black Country

I applied for a job as a coach … but then got offered the role of Project Manager after 2 weeks. It was because I already had links with people in the community, and so was able to organise a session where 30 attended, as my first project.
-Project manager, Black Country
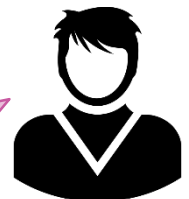
1. Being **accessible** and **familiar** to the local community is a key factor in becoming trusted/embedded

Project workers 'on the ground' felt that creating **familiarity** for participants was particularly key to gaining trust and encouraging attendance

- **Participants trust the organisation if their friends do – often it's "not cool" to go to organised events**

- **Projects often encourage attendance in friendship groups:**
  - Targeting schools / existing groups
  - Organising one-off taster sessions, easier for a group of friends to go to than joining a 'course'
  - Staff identifying popular kids, or pairs or groups, and particularly encouraging them
  - A project realised someone applying for a coach position could use their local influence better in a project manager role.

All volunteers at a Youth Group in Manchester were familiar to the young people in some way. The leader was well-known in the community, there was a teacher from the local primary school, a social worker who had worked with some of the families, and a young volunteer who grew up in the area.

At the start of a girls' youth club in London, a young girl ran into the hall and threw her arms around the coach's neck. The girl was eager to tell the researcher they "were best friends and had known each other for ages."

We do find that when the popular group stops coming for a bit, our numbers go down. It's important to think about who your "influencers" are.
-Youth Worker, London

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KEY FACTOR

2. Organisations had to provide a **consistent** service to the community

Some felt that people in disadvantaged communities can have chaotic lives, have little experience of consistency and stability, and low expectations of "authority" figures in terms of being there for them

Ensure you have the resource to offer what you say you'll offer, even if it's modest (don't overpromise)
- Ensuring they provide consistent sessions "rain or shine"
- If a session is cancelled, trying to contact people / give a reason
- Long-term sessions, i.e. that continue regularly for many months or even years, become trusted

Provide consistent coaches and volunteers where possible – building familiarity
- People look forward to/ feel safe seeing faces they know each session

We have always made sure that we are sustainable – that we don't try and grow too big too quick – as we don't want to let people down
-Leader, Black Country

In one session, where the researcher arrived the session leader (for a girls' youth group) was sitting in an empty room, assuming no one would come to the session due to a local school's parents evening, but had turned up "just in case someone does want to come". In the end, three families did, and they all played together

Three of our site visits were conducted on some of the coldest days of the year, but this did not deter participants showing up to play – including 60 kids to one outdoor session.

2. Organisations had to provide a **consistent** service to the community

The site visits revealed that consistency is absolutely key, but throws up challenges for some

- One organisation mentioned that due to funding inconsistencies and changes in organisational structure, the Youth Group had changed times a few times over past 8 years, and location once

- Each change impacted on attendance as awareness for the new session / location would be low

- The change in location had the biggest impact – very few people knew the Youth Group was there and running on some evenings

- It is now an ongoing task to raise awareness and get people through the door.

One coach in the Black Country mentioned that the very things that make some of the volunteers great in their role (their enthusiasm and their life experience / challenges being similar to those of the people taking part), can mean that they are not always the most reliable volunteers due to other distractions in their life: school, college, friendships, generally growing up.

Advice for similar projects might include an awareness of this, and consideration about what might encourage young and slightly 'flaky' volunteers to be more consistent (award schemes? Some other kind of reward? Regular contact (e.g. mentoring) from more senior coach/staff/volunteers?

3. Understanding the **needs of the community** was key to embedding and building trust amongst the community

Also, providing popular sessions means that people are more likely to attend, which increases trust if the experience is good

Informal opinion gathering day-to-day
- Once you are 'known', speaking to people as you go shopping, as you visit cafes, the library, the pub, asking them what they want to see more of / what they / their kids / their friends might enjoy doing
- The site visits showed this was common on an ad hoc basis, within the projects

"Formal" consulting
- Attending community meetings, housing association meetings, school meetings, special interest groups, and asking people what they want to see in their community
- This was felt to be less common overall, but some participants/coaches said they would like more of this

Identifying & meeting needs not related to sport and activity
- Responding to obvious needs that they see in the community around them, in particular:
  - Mental health
  - Employment
  - Confidence
  - Life skills
- One felt that their awareness of the community's needs meant they ensured there was plenty of non-sporting activities like baby clinics, healthy eating advice, 'senior' get-togethers, which enabled them to earn the trust of people they would not have reached if they had only offered sport or activity sessions

However, when consulting, one project commonly finds that the only activity the local youngsters want is football, even though they are able to provide other activities.

They would like support in encouraging engagement with other sports/ways of being active.

4. Good **quality equipment and coaches** was a key part of the organisation for most

Where possible, provide a well maintained venue / good quality equipment and good quality coaches
- Ensures people know that there is a consistently friendly, welcoming and safe space for them / their children to go – they know what to expect and can trust the environment.
- People are also sent the message that they are 'worth' good quality and they are trusted with it, which fosters trust in return.

For projects that included in their offering an indoor, especially multi-functional, social space, the warmth and cleanliness of the space felt particularly important.

This was particularly the case for parents who brought younger children to the centre; for sessions involving older people in the community; where food preparation was a part of the project; or for spaces where older children simply socialised.

For projects that largely operated outdoors, or were entirely (or almost entirely) sport- or activity-focussed, the quality of the venue and the equipment seemed perhaps less important.

For these projects, the key factor was the enthusiasm and the welcoming banter of the coaches, and we felt that a battered venue or old equipment – while not ideal– would not necessarily have detracted from engagement with the project.
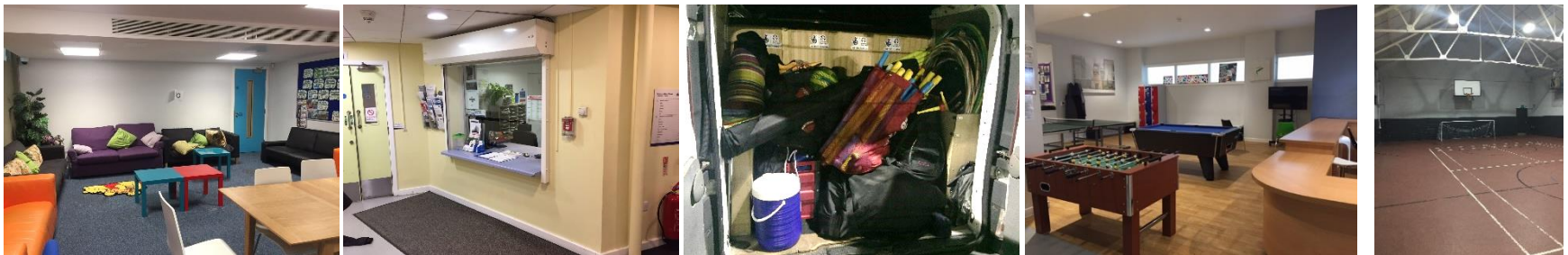
5. Unfaltering **respect** (from and for everyone) was a key factor for building widespread trust

This entails maintaining a visible value system of respect (for self, others and the centre), openness, fairness, and equal opportunities.

Consistently show, and expect, respect and good behaviour
- Staff and coaches make it consistently clear across all sessions that disrespect, prejudice, bullying, etc., are not tolerated at any point
- They also ensure that they are always respectful, open and warm to everyone. This consistency of expected and shown behaviour grows trust over time

Equal opportunities for all
- Organisations generally gave equal opportunities to all; the homeless community, all abilities, disabilities, ethnicities and genders
- The organisations always tried to accommodate anyone, and found it upsetting when they couldn't make it work

After a sports session, a group of young boys were playing around and shouting by reception, and the leader reprimanded them gently for making jokes involving the word 'gay'. She then went into the sports hall to let the coaches know, and asked them to chat it through with the boys next time they had a session together.

Here we know that you need to listen to everyone because everyone is important.
-*Small girl at youth group, London*

Posters on the wall about respecting self and others, thinking before you speak, taking care of property

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Trust: longer term considerations

1. "Handing the organisation back" to the community
2. Partnership working

1. When organisations can hand the organisation back to the community to run they can **maintain** trust

Therefore the organisation becomes something that they own / are part of, rather than something being 'done to them.' Organisers hope that this ensures that energy levels and engagement stay high over time.

Trying to ensure that attendees are encouraged to become volunteers / coaches
- This grows the individuals in question which results in them trusting and appreciating the organisation that developed them
- Also engages those who are watching members of their own community get involved, complete training, perhaps become leaders

Site visits suggested that providing development for locals (structured, or simply informal) felt very important in creating a feeling of trust, and becoming embedded, in the community, creating…

Employment or similar development (experience, CV-boost, training)

Increase in personal confidence

Something to watch and aim for in younger / other members of the community / family

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2. Gaining trust of **partner organisations** was felt to help sustain the organisations in the **long-term**

- Projects felt that making links with other organisations in the community was of utmost importance for creating an 'embedded' project

- For some, the definition of 'embedded' was that you were part of a close-knit network of organisations working together for the good of the community

- By forming links and relationships it means organisations can share best practise, problem solve, share training, equipment and venues

- It also means that it may be easier to offer a greater variety of sessions and be consistent in your offering, which helps people to trust the organisation

The kids like coming here – the facilities are nice and it's a warm, safe place for them to hang out after playing football here. I think it brings life into the local area, the fact we all come here
-Volunteer, Black Country

The projects gained trust with the following organisations:

- **Local shops and facilities within the community** – participation bringing life to local businesses
- **Police and local authorities** – this helped them to feel embedded, in that they had 'access' to information that allowed them to provide important support
- **Local schools** – trusted by teachers and parents
- **Other organisations** – e.g. creative/performing arts

Funding and sustainability

- Key funding sources used
- Proactive and reactive approaches to funding
- Sustainability over the longer term

Key funding sources used
Most project used multiple funders, but were reliant on a core few

Projects funding sources are generally numerous & varied – most often this is funding from governmental or sporting sources. Some financially sustain themselves to a certain extent through charging for sessions and renting out spaces.

Council / LA funding

These were consistently mentioned and were considered 'core' funders
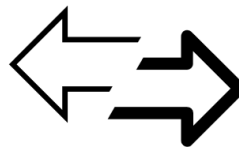
Renting sports or office space

Income from fees

European funding

The 'other' funding sources which were less consistently mentioned

Individual donations from people wanting to 'give back'

Only one example

Proactive and reactive approaches to funding

Projects are proactive…	..and reactive to funding opportunities

Projects commonly apply for, and use, funding for almost all aspects of their day to day running costs:
- **Paying for training for coaches**
- **Paying staff wages**
- **Maintaining / hiring venues**
- **Overheads**
- Buying / replacing equipment
- One off activities like day trips for locals

However, funding is not always used to attend to a current existing need or priority – if they become aware of funding for something specific outside of their usual remit (e.g. related to a sport or activity they don't yet provide) they may apply anyway and then, if successful, use the funding to put something new in place.

Without this funding, the projects would largely cease to run, as they would not be able to pay wages or cover their overheads.

We may see some funding for something to do with rugby, so we might tweak our bid a bit so we can secure that funding. And it might mean we try and put on something new for the community
*-**Leader/finance, London***

Funding priorities for projects included: expanding to new geographic areas, rolling out successful models in new places, being able to run more sessions (at new times), purchasing basic equipment for activities.

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Sustainability
Some projects are actively thinking about how to be more sustainable over the longer term

Although this is less common and they are still dependant on funding. These projects could be helped to create additional income outside of their current funding streams

Creating a Theory of Change model to better understand the necessary project resources going forwards, and thus plan for the future.

One project is going to start printing and selling t-shirts

Opening a cafe

One project wants to introduce a Local Enterprise Scheme: some local youngsters want to start small businesses e.g. make food, or other products, at the project venue, and then sell them in the community. The project will take a percentage of the profit.

Introduce a nursery / creche to the centre. It is hoped this will 'pay for itself' as well as help to support other aspects of the project.

Increasing their fundraising activity – currently they only have a fundraising member oi staff in the centre one day a week, but they want to increase this.

If we can get this nursery up and running we can breathe easier for a bit…
-Leader/finance, London

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Increasing the sporting/active offer, and support needed to do this

- Summary
- Do organisations want to increase their sporting / activity offering?
- What specifically do organisations want to do more of? What barriers do they face?
- Specifics of support needed from StreetGames
- Current support received from StreetGames

Do organisations want to increase their sporting / activity offering?

YES!

All want to do this – there was a general sense of this being a positive thing to do for the community.

Why?

- To improve the health of the community e.g. general fun activity / 'playtime' for children rather than specific sports, to help to reduce issue of young obesity and develop an active habit early in life
- Perception that there are specific needs or issues in the community that can be improved by sport or activity
  - Mental health
  - Isolation
  - Boredom, especially amongst young people, and 'getting into trouble' as a result
- Perception that there are audiences in the community that are not being catered for:
  - Women (particularly those from cultures where women may not commonly exercise); girls
  - Disabled people
  - Older people
  - People who are unfit or unwell
- Meeting more people's needs in terms of different session times, different locations
- Making better use of a space that is sometimes empty
- Expanding a current offer to greater numbers of communities

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What specifically do they want to do in the future?

Nearly all: Projects want to **grow**…

Various individuals involved in the projects, from volunteers, to coaches and parents and the participants themselves, expressed a desire to expand:
- Replicating what they do in other local areas
- Offer more sessions, at new times, to be accessible to more people
- Roll out successful schemes
- Employ more staff
- Move to a building that would facilitate growth

Having a positive effect on <u>more</u> people is seen as more important than offering different sports/activities or fancier equipment. That said…
- Some lacked the basic equipment to offer the activities they would like to, e.g. indoor nets / soft balls / rackets.
- **Some** mentioned different sports such as Kickboxing, MMA, Rugby, Basketball, and American Football

Note: A few feel a big achievement would be continuing as they already are, as future funding is uncertain

Nearly all: delivery more with own staff

- Want to train more staff in a greater number of activities

A few: More sport/activity for specific audiences e.g. disabled people

- Feel that this is an area they need to tap into if they want to 'be the best'
- Provide for:
    - People with physical and mental health conditions
    - Older people
    - Pregnant people
- However, they would want to 'do it right', e.g. they want their staff to be properly trained – wouldn't want their staff to coach these audiences if not ready

'I wouldn't want to send my staff on disabled sports sessions if they're not ready. I want them to be properly trained'
– Project Manager, Black Country

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What specific challenges do projects face to increasing their offering?

For many – a lack of finance for staff and volunteer training

Some – relatively low awareness of the organisation within the community.
- Not enough resource to have a role dedicated to increasing awareness
- Not enough expertise e.g. on social media to make the most of the resource available

For a few - lack of interest within the community e.g. children are more interested in playing with technology, adults don't see being active as a priority.

For a few - lack of good quality / accessible venues, and where they exist, lack of funding for hiring these, particularly on an ongoing basis

'The kids will come to a session and they tell me that they are going home straight away to play on their Xbox'
– Coach, Black Country

Specifics of SG support required to increase sporting / active offering (1)

Support with practical aspects of running sports / activities – coaches and training, and getting people to come along

Development of coaches / volunteers (this was really key)
- Provision of training for new coaches and volunteers; and further development for existing staff to increase their teaching skills but also their confidence / leadership skills, and ability to engage / recruit new attendees or volunteers.

Provision of coaches and volunteers for specific sessions / to take the pressure off existing staff
- Providing coaches to teach certain activities that perhaps the centre's existing coaches don't have the expertise to do.
- Or, providing coaches so that an organisation can put on more sessions, at different times, than they would be able to otherwise.
- SG have provided longer-term volunteers (and covered their expenses) for one organisation which was very helpful.

Financial assistance
Funding already received had been invaluable. Further funding will always help organisations, particularly to start new activities

Thanks to Street Games we were able to start yoga sessions here. Their funding meant the teacher was free for us for 6 weeks, so the cost to go along and do yoga was minimal – maybe a pound, maybe it was free. After the 6 sessions, we found that those that enjoyed it were willing to pay a little more to keep the teacher on.
-Leader, London

Assistance using social media for maximum publicity of organisations / engagement with community

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Specifics of SG support required to increase sporting / active offering (2)

StreetGames are considered to be expert, approachable and very helpful already – there is an appetite for further support with management, funding, safety and making connections with other organisations.

More use of StreetGames expertise in terms of new developments / specific audiences
- Information on targeting specific groups e.g. disabled people, those with mental health issues, pregnant women
- Safeguarding information and training so that all staff and coaches know how to spot (e.g.) potential neglect or abuse, and crucially, what to do about it if they see it (one project had posters in the office on neglect, but others seemed less sure).
- Organisations already trust StreetGames to provide the latest ideas, news, trends and considerations when it comes to sports / activities. Continuing to receive emails and communications about this welcomed.

Making the case for exercise, or different sorts of exercise
- Provision of a booklet / 'evidence' that shows how exercise improves health and helps communities, in order to persuade decision makers if an organisation sits under a larger umbrella organisation. Alternatively, funding for research within the community.
- Advice on ways of encouraging the community to try different types of activities, rather than just football for instance. Some projects have skills to provide other activities but find there is no appetite.

Links with other organisations – large and small
- This is particularly in terms of creating links to **established** / **larger** / **national** organisations for networking, and with **similar / smaller** organisations for sharing best practise and potentially sharing venues, equipment and staff training
- Specifically, contact with national bodies to perhaps offer demonstrations of sports / activities on a local level

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StreetGames are currently helping projects in a whole host of ways

Easy and pleasant to work with
- Approachable
- Available
- Will call you back
- Friendly

Staff and volunteer training
- Lots of different training
- Trainers very engaging, from local area
- For free

We're really pleased that we have a direct line to Street Games now – we used to have someone acting as the 'middle man', but now we know [NAME] personally. They are really good, very friendly. Sometimes you don't want to make certain phone calls to some people in this job, but I never feel like that about Street Games!
-Youth leader, London

[SG PERSON] delivers a lot of the training and he's really good. He's the sort of the person who will go out of his way always to help. He's from a police officer background, a real all round good guy. He'll always call you back.

- Manager, Black Country

Donation of specific equipment when needed
- One proudly showed us their new baked potato oven, that they can use in their 'soup kitchen' and café.

Templates for documents e.g. volunteer application forms / case studies
- Allows the organisation to feel confident they are getting the documents right, and spending less time doing it

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Summary: Support from StreetGames - current and future

Already provided to some organisations

A friendly, approachable sounding board	Staff and volunteer training	Donation of specific equipment	Templates and guidance on forms e.g. volunteer application forms / funding applications	Funding

Ideal future support to enable increased sporting / activity (aside from funding)

Practical help with activities

Further training of coaches and volunteers	Providing coaches and volunteers

Key support

Management and knowledge sharing

Expertise on targeting niche audiences / safeguarding	Facilitating links with other organisations (local and small, as well as national)	Continuing to send emails with new developments in sport and activity

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