



# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

StreetGames' Family Engagement Project is a 30-month project (funded by the Healthy and Active Fund) which aims to engage with families who are inactive, isolated or who have challenging circumstances which may impact on their health and wellbeing. Managed by StreetGames, the project is working across seven local authorities in South Wales, collaborating with a range of partners to offer physical activity, provide support and build community and family cohesion, driven by local need.

StreetGames are focused on ensuring that the approach used is right; engages with the 'right' families and creates a sustainable behaviour change within communities. This project employs a longitudinal approach to working with and tracking families' physical activity behaviour change over time. The information in this document was collected through conversations with project staff working in each of the seven areas and looks to illustrate how the locally trusted organisations and families have adapted during lockdown so far.

## WHY

Contemporary research indicates that many families in Wales face challenging circumstances which can affect their health and wellbeing, including physical activity levels as demonstrated here:



**1 IN 3**

*Young people in Wales grow up in Poverty*



**£3.21**

*Low income households have as little as £3.21 per week to spend on leisure activities*



**42%**

*of children from the most deprived households taking part in sport and physical activity 3 or more times a week*



**1/5**

*of parents on low incomes in Wales, worry about the lack of emotional relationship they hold with their children due to financial stresses*

The situation above can often lead to 'double jeopardy' where many young people living in poverty, who are less active, also face the challenge of living with parents/guardians who are completely inactive. This suggests that there is a need to engage more widely with the family as a whole if long-term behaviour change is to be achieved.

The project is working with communities identified as being most at need and offers a novel approach to tackling some of the issues that these families face in an attempt to increase their physical activity levels and improve their overall health and wellbeing.

## WHERE

There are seven areas involved in the project who were identified at the application stage based on being areas of high deprivation, high ASB and crime levels and low health and wellbeing of many residents. The seven areas and lead organisations are as follows:

### CAERPHILLY

VALLEYS GYMNASTICS ACADEMY

### TORFAEN

BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL

### NEWPORT

NEWPORT LIVE LEISURE TRUST /  
NEWPORT 'COUNTY IN THE COMMUNITY'

### BRIDGEND

BRIDGEND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

### MERTHYR

MERTHYR TYDFIL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

### CARDIFF

SPORT CARDIFF

### BLAENAU GWENT

ANEURIN LEISURE TRUST

## MARCH - SEPTEMBER

During lockdown, the lead Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs), who drive the local activity in each area, have adapted delivery to meet the needs of the families engaged prior to Covid-19, as well as bringing new families on board. Whilst the activity sessions originally planned for this period have not gone ahead, LTOs have adapted to the conditions by providing online delivery and guidance, welfare checks, physical resources, activity trackers and much more have been distributed to a wide range of beneficiaries within all seven of the identified Local Authority areas.



# ENGAGING FAMILIES DURING LOCKDOWN

The lockdown across the UK had forced all sport and physical activity sessions to stop completely, but the LTOs involved in this project have used great ingenuity to continue to engage with families during an unprecedented time.

## FOOD

Early on in lockdown, access to food became a primary cause of concern for a lot of families living in deprived areas across the country. Community organisations were quick to recognise that if families were being forced to self-isolate they would face the very real prospect of not being able to go shopping and as such, go hungry. LTOs in Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, played a crucial role in stepping in to deliver food parcels to those most at need in their communities. In addition to the delivery of food, in Torfaen they used this as a starting point to launch a food poverty project - aimed at educating families in healthy eating by providing them with ingredients for three meals, combined with an online learn to cook session guiding them through recipes and how to cook with these ingredients. Families were also provided with recommended walking routes, where they could get out into nature and find places to enjoy their picnics.

## MENTAL WELLBEING

We have seen across the country that mental wellbeing has been adversely affected for many during lockdown, LTOs have played an important role in supporting the wellbeing of the families in the communities they work in. Interventions across the organisations involved in the FEP have included the development of a mobile app (Newport) and also a Youtube channel (Cardiff) specifically for the purpose of supporting families by providing resources about physical activity, diet and nutrition, emotional support and wellbeing as well as general tips and advice for families to stay active during lockdown, including a range of fun games to play using common household items - showing it is possible to get active without specialist equipment.

Many LTOs across the seven areas also made calls, both over the phone and in person, to individual families throughout lockdown, checking in on their wellbeing by simply having a chat with them. This personal touch was incredibly important, for families to know that there were people who did genuinely care about them and their wellbeing, which made a huge difference at a time when some families were particularly cut off and isolated from their community.

## ONLINE

As with many organisations across the country, lockdown has forced a change in the way we operate, with much activity moving online, the community organisations involved in this project were no different. LTOs in the seven areas had success in offering online activities for families to engage with. This ranged from family fitness classes, quizzes, wellbeing challenges and much more. All of this activity has been important in that in keeping in regular contact with families has kept up the momentum on this programme, even through such difficult times. The work done in this time by the LTOs across each area will allow the transition back into activity in person to be much smoother as facilities begin to gradually reopen.

## ACTIVITY PACKS

All of the LTOs involved in the project supported families by distributing equipment (supplied by various National Governing Bodies) which they could use by themselves to remain active, such as, Tennis racquets and balls. Particular priority was given to families most at need, if for example a family may not have many toys or games to keep children entertained, this equipment was very useful.

StreetGames also provided each LTO with activity journals as a way of encouraging and tracking how much activities families were able to do during lockdown. This will also prove very useful in gauging where to pitch activity levels when families are able to return to venues in person, as each family is likely to be at different points and as such will have different needs to consider. In total,

1,100 activity journals were distributed across Wales.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The different ways in which people were affected by lockdown very quickly highlighted which families in the different communities were really most at need, bringing them into contact with the LTOs much faster than it would have taken without lockdown. Some may never have got involved at all.

This is the same for those young people who have different needs, a particular example is Looked After Children (LAC). In Bridgend, a summer holiday hub has provided provision for 48 young people with intense, trauma informed, needs. Offering daily activities to positively engage this group through physical activity, arts and crafts and games has been a vital support for their families, who may not always be able to provide the same level of support. This has really accelerated the process of building up trust and engagement with these families and young people, who are now fully bought into the programme.

Lockdown conditions have also allowed LTOs to think more innovatively, using new ideas and creative ways of engaging families. An example of this is the Proclaimer Challenge in Merthyr, as a way of staying active, families collectively were encouraged to walk 500 miles during lockdown. A sign of how successful and well received this initiative was is, to date the families involved have clocked up over 989 miles, almost doubling the initial target!

Another significant positive to come out of the last few months has been the way community organisations have worked together in partnership to really do all they can for the families most at need. When normality does eventually return, LTOs in all of the seven areas will be able to look back in pride knowing that it was they who were there to help those families most at need - when they needed it most.



## CHALLENGES

**Digital Deprivation.** A proportion of families engaged in the programme don't have access to online content, either through lack of internet, and/or lack of appropriate equipment. If a family doesn't have access to a laptop for example, they will not sign into any of the online provision, regardless of whether they have internet connection.

It has been a real challenge first identifying which families these are, and then ensuring that they are not forgotten within the provision LTOs offer. Meaning often LTOs will have to replicate the work they do over multiple channels.

**Online Fatigue.** It was observed that the longer lockdown went on, the less engaged families were with online content only, really showing the need to getting activity back up and running in person as soon as it is safe to do so.

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