

STREETGAMES PARTICIPANT PATHWAYS INSIGHT STUDY



Summary Key Messages & Actions



StreetGames has recently undertaken new research work together with research agency 2CV, to explore sports participation pathways amongst disadvantaged young people.

The research involved consulting with a range of young people (aged 14-25 years) in areas of high deprivation to look back at what activities they had done previously, what they currently do (if any) and what they thought they might do in the future to gain a deeper understanding of what young people's sporting pathways look like and whether people 'hop' from one activity to another and if so what are the key influencers and barriers.

This document provides a summary of the key messages from the insight study together with some suggested actions on how Doorstep Sport can help.

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE INSIGHT STUDY

Young people's participation in sport is often passive and opportunistic – they tend to 'drift' in and out of activities without obvious direction. This is largely because, whilst sport/fitness is of interest, it is rarely a top priority. As such, it will often be quickly pushed aside for other priorities and as the pressures of 'real life' become more apparent.

However, whilst young people may drop out of sports quite easily, it seems just as easy to take them up.

Availability and support can have a big impact on participation - as such, there is clear scope to encourage greater participation.

HOW DOORSTEP SPORT CAN HELP

Availability and support can have a big impact on participation – a good local Doorstep Sport offer can provide this. Doorstep Sport offers are designed to be:

- Convenient and local; within walking distance of the young persons' homes, on their estate or somewhere else that young people already go with their friends – **RIGHT PLACE**. Facilities within easy access negate the need for car travel, save money on bus fares, make getting to sport hassle-free and save on travel time. Specialist sports facilities are not always necessary. Activities should run in a familiar neighbourhood space. The right place is often a neighbourhood park, a MUGA, a community hall, a car park, a youth centre, an amenity green space or even a beach. These types of spaces are also usually highly visible – so help to raise awareness.

- Low cost to ensure that they are affordable. Young people are usually only willing/able to pay between £1-2 for Doorstep Sport activities, but in some cases the need for free or heavily subsidised pricing is essential. Pay and play pricing is essential rather than upfront membership, affiliation or course fees – **RIGHT PRICE**.
- Run at times which most suit the young people being targeted. The right time will be different for young people at different life stages. Unless it is holiday time or when working with NEETS, evening activity sessions will often prove most popular (with Friday nights often the best night for younger teenagers who are not old enough for pubs and clubs). Older teenagers who do not want to mix with younger ones might prefer a later start. To find out the right time of day, consultation with the young people is essential – **RIGHT TIME**.

- When teenagers and young adults are tempted into sport 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 fun, friendly and informal, varied and vibrant. They want it to take place close to home and they want a say in what goes on at their sports sessions – **RIGHT STYLE**.
- Successful Doorstep Sport sessions are fun, friendly and engaging. This atmosphere is largely determined by having the right coaches to lead the sessions – **RIGHT PEOPLE**. Those most effective tend to have a sophisticated blend of inter-personal, youth work and sport specific knowledge. Young people tell us that they most want a coach / instructor who is welcoming, friendly, approachable, helpful, makes sessions fun and is someone they can relate to. The inclusion of 'peer champions' and young volunteers are also really important.

'I don't really do anything at the moment but I do sometimes walk into town rather than take the bus as I guess that's good for you!'

'I do netball in school but I wouldn't try and join a club outside school as you have to be really good, its not like they teach you'

'When I was younger all I cared about was fitting in and hanging out with my friends- I stopped playing basketball when I started drinking and going out'

'Everything changed when I had my baby girl- now my life revolves around taking care of her and being a good mum'

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE INSIGHT STUDY

Young people tend not to actively seek out new sports. Instead they often rely on other people and their environment to nudge them into participation (e.g. being asked to join the school netball team, a friend asking to come along to a class or a new local session starting).

HOW DOORSTEP SPORT CAN HELP

Undertaking **outreach work**, the provision of **taster sessions** and encouraging existing participants and volunteers to act as **peer promoters and champions** can be a really effective way to 'nudge' other young people into taking part and trying new activities in their local area.

Once engaged, doorstep sport offers should ensure that there is a **vibrant and varied multi-sport offer** available that will encourage young people to try new and different activities. This can be further supplemented via the provision of pop up sports and festivals, where young people will be exposed to a wide range of sports; some they may have never tried before.

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE INSIGHT STUDY

Young people are often sensitive to relatively small triggers and barriers. For example if a friend stops attending, a session is cancelled or the venue/time changes this can result in drop out.

HOW DOORSTEP SPORT CAN HELP

Ensure **consistency** in sessional provision as much as possible. Avoid cancelling sessions at late notice; if it is unavoidable to cancel a session, send messages via social media if possible; and ensure that someone is there to tell the young people that turn up when the next session will be taking place.

Help young people to **grow their sporting capital** (*sporting knowledge, connections, confidence and skills*) by encouraging them to take part in different activities, talk about other offers that are available in the local area, visit local venues where young people can take part in sport/fitness activities independently – perhaps try taking part in local events such as a group fun run or cycle ride to help **build resilience**.

'I really hated PE at school but recently I've been going to the gym with my mum which is ok – not as embarrassing!'

'I went to boxing when I was 16, my mates were going and it looked cool, I went for about 6 months but I stopped when I got injured'

'I did lots of sport at school because I kind of 'had to' – then as soon as I finished school I stopped completely'

'If there were more facilities for me to play football and bring my kid along and know there was someone to take care of her I would love to play again'



KEY MESSAGES FROM THE INSIGHT STUDY

Young people often lack a 'holistic health' view. Sport is often an 'adjunct to life' - it is not always connected to other parts of life, such as overall wellbeing (looking and feeling good), it can feel 'one dimensional' and limited to getting a better body or used as social cred (especially for boys).

HOW DOORSTEP SPORT CAN HELP

Attach sports to **young people's priorities** - this may for example be about: 'being fit and healthy', 'team work and leadership', 'having fun and socialising' or 'improving performance/ being challenged'. Be clear on **benefits that taking part** can offer e.g. this may be in terms of personal development rather than purely a sport/fitness angle.

To help challenge the status of what it means to be 'sporty' and help to position sport as the 'norm' – ensure that the **fun/informal style** of Doorstep Sport sessions is clearly conveyed in the marketing, communication and imagery used to promote sessions and encourage existing participants and volunteers to act as **peer champions and young leaders** to spread the word.

'I go to the gym to look good- I don't want to get fat'

'I want to be fit and healthy for my daughter- I don't want to be the fat mum chasing her daughter at the playground'

'My brother always invites me for a kick-around with his mates so that's what got me started'

'If my friends went to gym classes I would go with them- I don't like to go alone'

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE INSIGHT STUDY

Participant pathways vary at different life stages. They can be broadly divided into three stages:

- **A 'taking part' phase amongst 14-16 year olds** where there is a high level of exposure to sports via PE at school, team sports are most common and authority figures such as parents, PE teachers and older siblings seem to exert most influence on how and when young people take part in sports.
- **A 'fitting in' phase amongst 16-19 year olds** where exposure to sports reduces as well as its level of priority in school/college. Social capital is of primary concern, looking good and NOT embarrassing yourself become more important and there is less openness to try new things. Peer group exerts more influence on what young people take part

in and keeping up with friends and looking good are important. For boys certain sports hold more social currency: 'football' 'boxing' 'basketball', whilst for girls the idea of sport does not fit with their ideal body type and often the gym is considered the best option.

- **A 'gaining control' phase amongst 18-25 year olds** - at this stage there is very little support, access or encouragement to do sport, young people must find it for themselves. However, a lack of time and money are major barriers. Those that do take part/want to take part tend to focus more on individual activities like going to the gym and are motivated by looking good/feeling good and to 'de-stress'. Partners and friends play an increasingly important role in activity levels- if they encourage it, participation is more likely.

HOW DOORSTEP SPORT CAN HELP

At the 'Taking Part' stage

Help young people to not only try new things but also to feel a sense of personal development in the activities they take part in. This will help them develop intrinsic enjoyment and stick to (or at least come back to) activities. Encouragement by coaches/ leaders etc. is important really important – provide regular feedback, set goals, provide rewards and incentives to work towards. Young people can be encouraged to become mentors themselves not necessarily based on sporting performance but on their willingness to take part.

At the 'Fitting In' stage

Attach sports to their priorities, being clear on the benefits' that sports offers to their social capital. Sports should be positioned as the 'norm' with accessibility and support keeping

up the momentum for sports (developed in earlier stage of the pathway). Challenge the status quo of what it means to be 'sporty', particularly for girls – see above.

At the 'Gaining Control' stage

At this stage young people are primed and ready to access sport because of physical/ well-being benefits that it can offer, but they need the reassurance that sports can be picked back up whatever your ability and barriers to access need to be minimized – i.e. facilities need to be low cost and offer opportunities for involvement that fit around other responsibilities.

To read a copy of the full insight study findings download the full report from the StreetGames website:

<http://www.streetgames.org/resources/2cv-research-participant-pathways-0>

'My friends and I used to go to the park and kick a ball around – now I have two kids and they are my priority'

'If there was a football field near my house I would play all the time- there is no green space where I live, so it's difficult'

'When I was at school one of the coaches took interest in me and encouraged me to join the rugby team because he thought I would be good at it. After school he wasn't around so I just stopped'

'My mum didn't have time to take me to swimming practice'

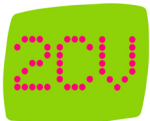


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