



YOUTH VOICE CONSULTATION

2021

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INTRODUCTION

In March 2021, conversations were held with nearly one hundred young people¹, comprising doorstep sport participants, volunteers and former volunteers/young advisors through a series of virtual focus groups and opportunities to complete an online survey.

The young people shared views about things that mattered to them:

- In their **lives** – sharing what is currently important, future aspirations and the role of sport;
- Their **communities** – sharing things that are good, things that are not so good and things that could improve their local area for young people; and
- About **sport** – sharing feedback about their doorstep sport sessions and wider sporting activities, in terms of: what they like, what could be improved or changed to help more young people to be active.

The research was conducted via: five virtual focus groups and an online survey led by StreetGames, plus additional feedback that was captured by LTOs in the network through direct discussion with young people.

¹) The young people who were involved in the research comprised a sample of doorstep sport participants, volunteers and former volunteers/young advisors from LTOs across the StreetGames network in both England and Wales. Participants were aged between 10-31 years (mean age was 16 years). There was an equal proportion of both males and females and in terms of ethnicity: 53% were white, 14% Black, 21% South Asian, 7% mixed and 5% unknown.



POSITIVITY!

One of the over-riding aspects which shone through the consultation; was that despite all of the challenges of the past year and the disproportionate impact of the Pandemic and Lockdown restrictions on those living in low-income, under-served communities, was how positively, many of the young people we spoke to were, about:

- Their communities – and how they value the ‘sense of community’, ‘friendliness’ and it being ‘close-knit’
- Their hopes and aspirations for the future
- The importance of sport and being active – sharing how much they enjoy their doorstep sport sessions
- Opportunities to get involved and take action locally – from sharing their views, helping to shape local offers, helping out at sessions or opportunities to attending training or take on leadership roles.

Young people also shared how their experiences during the past year had heightened their feelings, in terms of: the importance of physical health, friends & family, their education and being able to find a good job.

Young people also shared concerns – in particular, around: young people’s mental health and well-being and crime within their local areas. They also shared that they would like to see more local opportunities for young people to develop personally and to be active.

The feedback the young people provided has been hugely valuable and we are extremely grateful to each and every one of the young people that took part.

The feedback will be used to inform StreetGames future planning and strategy² and to help shape support for Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs) in the network and in turn, the offers they provide for young people.

This document provides an overview of the information and feedback that was captured through the focus groups series and online survey.

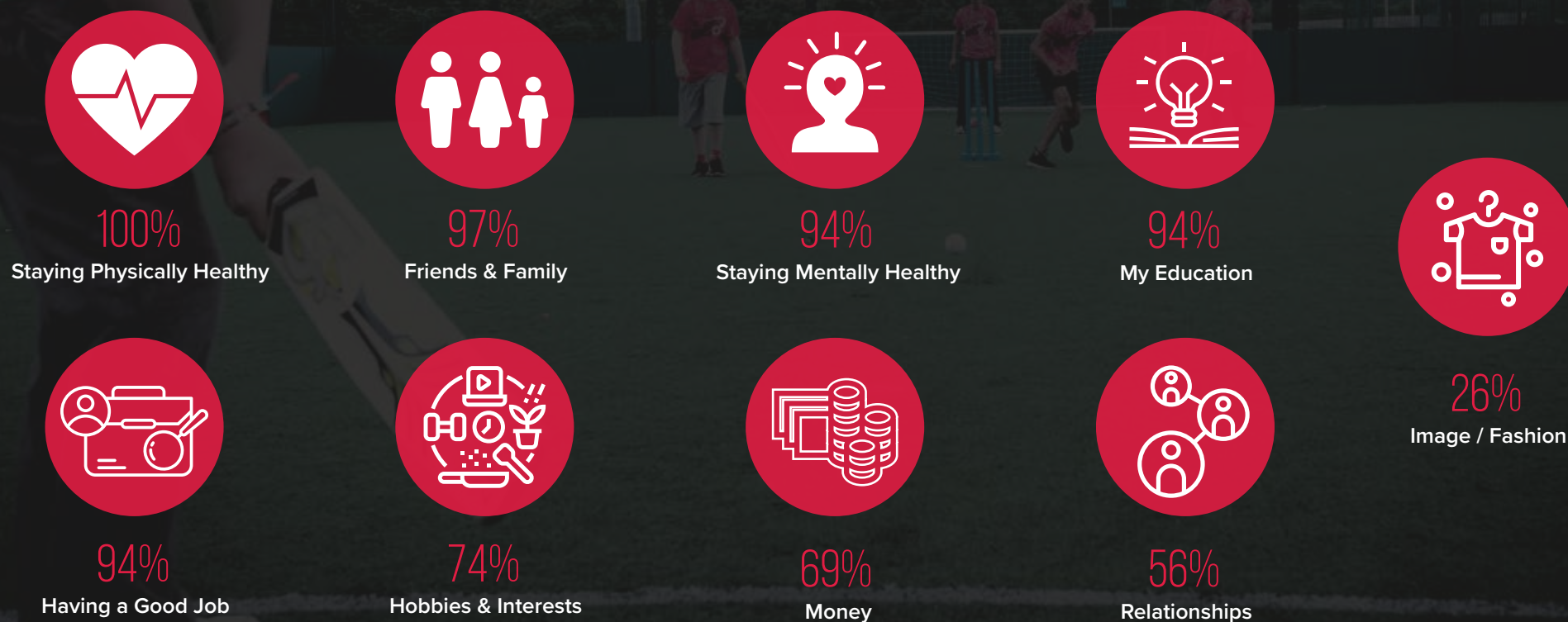
2) *In addition to undertaking consultation with young people, StreetGames has also hosted similar discussion groups during April-May with: LTOs in the network, external partners & stakeholders and StreetGames staff.*

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

We asked young people to share with us, the things that are most important in their lives and their aspirations for the future.

Young people shared how important a number of different things are to them – but overwhelmingly, they prioritised the importance of physical and mental health, friends/family and education/ employment in their life right now. This was illustrated via both the survey feedback (see Figure 1 below) and the discussions within the focus groups.

Figure 1 – Which of the following aspects are most important to you?
(% who selected: Important or Very Important)



MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Discussions in the focus groups emphasised how the experiences of the past year had heightened young people's feelings around the importance of mental health and well-being and there was a real awareness and concerns around the deterioration in the mental health and wellbeing amongst young people during the past year:

“ Mental health is a big thing – teenagers are really struggling. ”

“ Coming out of this pandemic there is going to be a massive pandemic in terms of mental health and well-being. Teenagers are really struggling so building that social element is really important. ”

“ Something the pandemic has shown is the importance of social support and social networks. ”

Through discussions in the focus groups, it is clear that many young people view mental health as equally important to physical health, with many also clearly recognising the benefits that being physically active can offer to mental wellbeing, whilst also showing empathy to those that struggle with mental health and showing a willingness to help:

“ Regular sessions help my mental health and going regularly helps me to maintain it. ”

“ It can be a bit lonely in the house and exercise makes you feel better. ”

“ Sessions are great for my mental health and motivation - it's really easy to say you're going to go running but it's much harder actually doing it. But by going to sessions regularly, you see improvements and it makes you want to keep going. ”

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

The young people we spoke to, shared how important their education is and being able to find a good job in the future.

Through both the online survey and focus groups, young people were asked: *'Where do you see yourself in ten years' time?'* – with all of the young people responding positively:

Circa 16% made it clear that they wanted to work in sport – around half mentioning playing professionally and the others wanted to work within Doorstep sport.

Circa 10% spoke of volunteering, working for charities or in roles that support people in need

"With my own business or being a manger for a youth centre anything to do with working with children, as I am a really passionate about helping them"

Around one-third aspired to have a successful business/professional role:

"Teaching PE overseas with a family"

"Stay focused in school but have a good balance of social life, sport, education and to practice engineering at an early age"

"I see myself as a doctor and helping out other people that need it"

Circa 14% saw themselves gaining qualifications at college or university

"...finish university, make new friends"

"...[I want to] progress my education and be more confident"

"I see myself graduated from university with a business degree and pursuing all of my dreams and my interests. I see myself with a stable job and I see myself happy"

Circa 20% aspired to have a stable, happy life, with mentions of 'enough money' and having a family:

"[I'd like to] go into nursing, get married and have kids"

Circa 8% hope to travel and see new places around the world.

"Hopefully doing a job I love and travelling the world when I can"

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

There was interest amongst many of the young people we spoke to, for personal development opportunities linked to sport. In particular, young people were keen for opportunities to attend training, qualifications, residentials and to take on volunteering and leadership roles – see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – Would you be interested in opportunities to:
(% who selected *Interested/ Very Interested*)

89%

OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTEND TRAINING /
GAIN QUALIFICATIONS

78%

OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTEND RESIDENTIALS
FOR YOUNG LEADERS

78%

HELPING OUT AT SESSIONS

67%

TAKING ON LEADERSHIP ROLES

67%

SHARING YOUR VIEWS / HELPING
TO SHAPE SESSIONS

Discussions within the focus groups, showed a real desire to gain new experiences, meet new people and to try new things somewhere new outside of their local area:

“...it’s good to get different experiences”

“I’d like going somewhere different, it’s good to get away”

“it’s nice to see different people than the same people weekly...”

Whilst many of the former Volunteers/Young Advisors shared how valuable these opportunities had been to them:

“I got all my qualifications through StreetGames, those little qualifications like Managing Challenging Behaviour edged my interview to teach. Some that I did a few years ago came in really useful recently”

“I liked that you got involved at the planning meetings and saw them through to fruition”

“..... I don’t know where I’d be professionally without the skills I got from helping organise those events”

“It was the most fun job you could have without knowing you were working”

“It was great meeting people from all over the UK”

“It was definitely good times...it was the opportunity you wouldn’t normally get in your own area”

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Young people also shared their views about their local community - sharing things they view as good, things that are not so good and things that could improve their local areas.

WHAT IS 'GOOD' ABOUT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?

PEOPLE/COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Many of the young people spoke positively about the people in their local area – words like 'friendly', 'welcoming' and 'close-knit' were used to describe their community, as well as enjoying the cultural diversity and vibrancy:

“ A lot of people round here went to my school, everyone knows each other and recently a trail was created around the avenues of little fairy houses ”

“ It's a very friendly place to be, everyone gets on with each other ”

“ The diversity of my neighbourhood is my favourite part of it as you can learn about new cultures and mix with people from other races, religions etc ”

PARKS/OPEN SPACES

Young people also highly valued having places to go in their local area - in particular parks and open spaces were considered important - circa **60%** of respondents to the online survey spoke positively of the parks and open spaces available in their neighbourhood.

“ There are a lot of big open spaces to play football and other sports ”

“ It has loads of area to do sports and to go and have a walk in the park ”

However, where parks and open spaces were run down/unkempt - these were places, that caused concern and in some areas were perceived as needing improving. (see below).

WHAT IS 'NOT GOOD' ABOUT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?

CRIME & SAFETY CONCERNS

Young people shared concerns relating to crime within their local areas, mentioning: gangs, knife crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour.

In the online survey over half (**57%**) said they don't feel safe walking alone in their local area and circa **60%** said they generally don't trust people in their neighbourhood.

Discussions within the focus groups highlighted, that although there was a great deal of positivity about their local areas, young people seemed to also be affected by at least one of the following issues, causing young people to feel often wary, unsafe and sometimes intimidated.

DRUGS/ALCOHOL

“ There are lots of ‘spice heads’ in my local area, its fine when they’re sitting alone but sometimes they hang about in groups. ”

“ There are lots of groups that hang around drinking, vandalising and causing trouble at night. ”

“ Drugs are on the up, especially in lockdown...they have nothing better to do and older siblings are getting younger siblings involved. ”

CRIME/GANGS

“ A young female shared via a focus group that there is gang mentality and ‘turf wars’ in her area, meaning her parents are concerned with her going out past a certain time. ”

“ The crime rate in my area is very high. Which sometimes can be a bit scary, it makes you feel unsafe and it can be frightening to go out. ”

“ Vandalism around our area is common. Some bad eggs in friendship groups will turn other people onto it too. ”

PARKS/OPEN SPACES

Although many spoke positively of their local parks and open spaces and the opportunities they can provide to socialise and be active, they can often be vandalised, intimidating and inaccessible at certain times.

“ I can't go for a run alone after 5 ”

“ All the equipment has been taken down and hasn't been replaced ”

LACK OF PROVISION / BOREDOM

Young people in the focus groups also shared their feelings around there being a lack of provision for young people in their area:

“...I feel like there isn't a lot to do....and this can lead to boredom and for some anti-social behaviour”

“I'd like more community activities...Creation used to do stuff in the parks and do activities and this brings people together”

This was also evident in the online survey feedback, where around two thirds of respondents said that there aren't many opportunities to play sport or have fun in their local area – see Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Opportunities in your local area:
(% who selected Agree/Strongly Agree)

60% THERE ARE LOTS OF OPEN SPACES FOR ACTIVITIES IN MY NEIGHBOURHOOD

43% I FEEL SAFE WALKING ALONE IN MY LOCAL AREA

40% GENERALLY, I CAN TRUST PEOPLE IN MY NEIGHBOURHOOD

37% THERE ARE LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN SPORT IN MY NEIGHBOURHOOD

34% THERE ARE LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES TO HAVE FUN IN MY NEIGHBOURHOOD

Some of the young people felt that this lack of opportunity could lead to some young people to becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour:

“It's easy to slip into bad habits in deprived areas”

“Crime is bad [here] and it's because there is nothing else for them to do”

“...It can have a lot to do with influence...if they don't have someone to look up to locally...our coaches tell us to be better than them so we have positive role models”

UNTIDY / RUN DOWN

Young people in the focus groups also talked about their area looked unkempt due to litter, graffiti and vandalism and this was also not helped by lots of closed down shops and unhealthy takeaways.

“It's just not nice to look at, there's litter everywhere. I would want to be out and about more if it was tidier”

There's too much junk food – “there are nine Chinese takeaways around us”

WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR LOCAL AREA BETTER?

MORE OPPORTUNITIES

Young people were asked to share their suggestions on what could help to make their local areas better. In the online survey over half **(55%)** said that they would like access to more sports and activity opportunities in their area, with the following factors all being mentioned:

Cost



"I'd like more free opportunities for young people. We have clubs and activities that you usually have to pay for and not everyone is fortunate enough to be able to pay for those. If there were more free activities then young people would be able to stay active."

More facilities to play on



"I'd like more outdoor community sports facilities, there's always motorbike tracks on our football pitches. There are good pitches but you have to pay."

More provision



"My area would be better if I had some activities to do near me."

Better access



"The council don't let us use sport places even when they're empty."

SAFER

Unsurprisingly, many young people spoke about how they would like their local areas to be safer, with:

"Less violence"

"More lighting"

"Lower crime rate"

"More people to be more trust worthy and respectful of the people around them"

TIDIER

Similarly, young people mentioned they would like their local area to look nicer:

"I wish people would pick up their litter"

"Graffiti is an eyesore and the litter is dirty, but it's hard to stop people."

SPORT

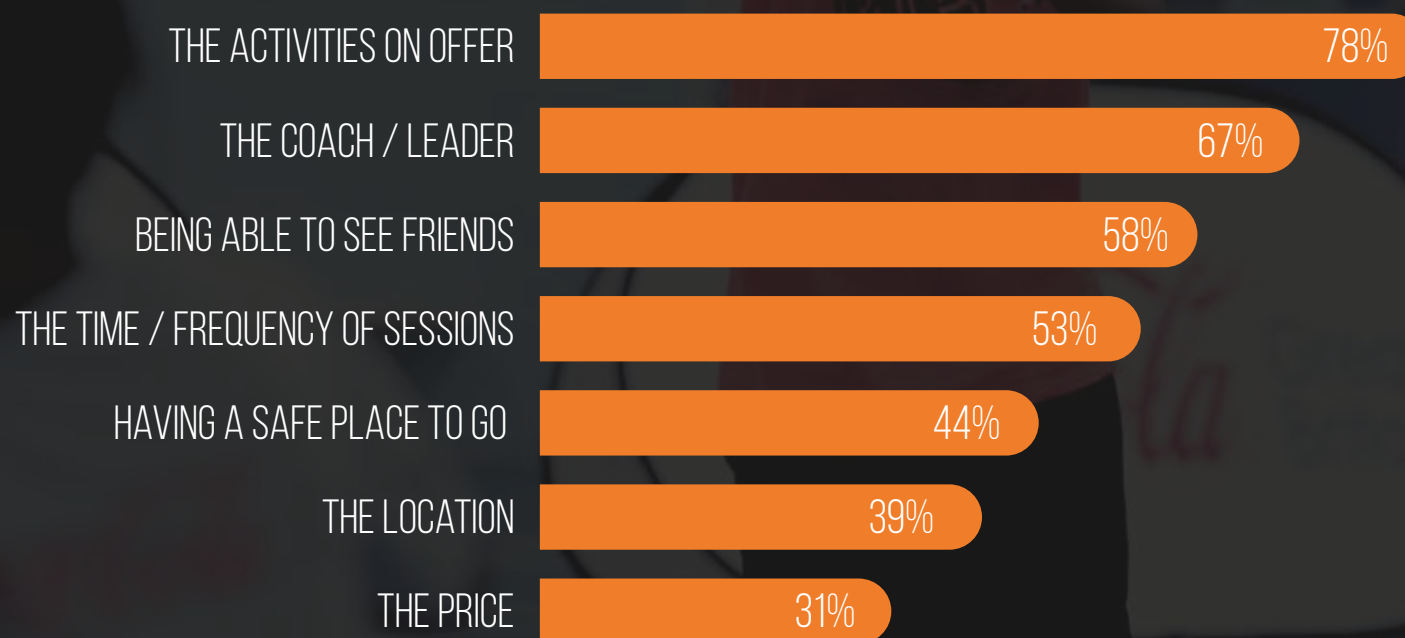
Young people were asked to share their thoughts about sports provision in their local area, both in terms of their doorstep sport sessions and wider sporting offers.

The discussions within the focus groups highlighted just how important sport is to many of the young people we spoke to and just how much they've missed the opportunities to come together to take part over the past year due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

DOORSTEP SPORT

In particular, the young people shared how much they enjoy the social aspect of their doorstep sport sessions – being with friends, the coaches/leaders, the informal style, the variety of offer, as well as sessions being close to home and low cost/free – see Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Which Aspects do you like most about your sessions?



THE OFFER

78% of the survey respondents highlighted that the activities on offer at their Doorstep Sport club were one of the things they liked most. The nature of Doorstep Sport delivery, or the 'Right Style' aspect of the Five Rights is evident in the focus group feedback.

At one of the focus groups all of the participants agreed together that they like that their sessions aren't too formal, they like the 'turn up and play' casual nature – others also shared:

“ The variety of activities really appeal to me ”

“being competitive, without it being a competition...it's just between us for a laugh, a bit of banter ”

“ You just get to do activities on your doorstep that you wouldn't get to do normally ”

Also young people at one of the focus group discussed in agreement how sports clubs or teams can have a 'cliquey' feel, something which they don't see at their Doorstep Sport sessions.

Whilst one former Young Advisor emphasised that for him, *'regular Doorstep sessions are what it's all about and we need those now more than ever'*.

THE RIGHT PERSON

A huge contributing factor to the 'Right style' of delivery is the 'Right Person', which **67%** of respondents to the online survey highlighted as one of the things they liked most about their sessions.

“ The coaches are all so friendly and have a great connection with the kids ”

After discussing the 'cliquey' environments that some young people said they'd found in sports clubs and teams, the same focus group went onto discuss the intense and sometimes 'forceful' coaching styles that they have experienced in the same settings. Three of the female participants shared how they feel that this style, along with cliquey teammates are more prevalent in female sport, having experienced this in netball teams, but never at their Doorstep Sport Club:

One of the participants shared how she used to get picked on by coaches at her netball club and it caused her to quit...

“ Now I play rugby, coach younger people and want to be a teacher when I'm older. I love coaching as it helps me to develop and I love learning about others and myself. ”

One of the participants started attending StreetGames sessions 10 years ago and knows that her first coaches are the reason she is a coach now...

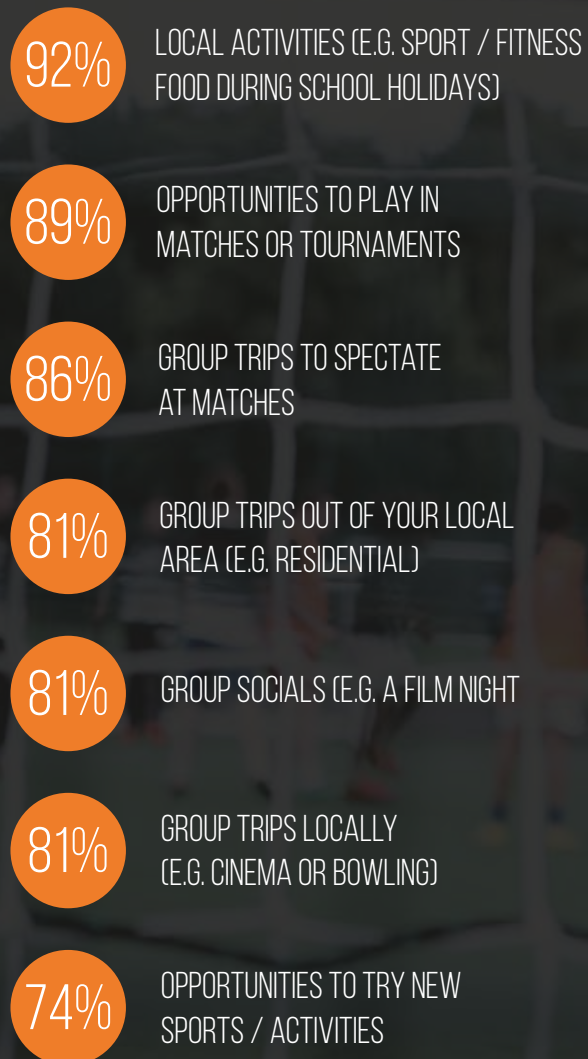
“ My role models made me realise that living in West Brom doesn't define what you can achieve. ”

WIDER OPPORTUNITIES – A VIBRANT & VARIED OFFER

In addition to regular Doorstep Sport sessions, young people were also asked their views about accessing wider opportunities. As Figure 5 below shows, there was keen interest, in opportunities to access: holiday activities, play matches/tournaments, group trips and group socials.

Figure 5: Would you be interested in:

(% who selected Interested/Very Interested)



Reinforcing the responses to the survey data, the focus group participants also shared that they'd be keen to try additional offers:

"I'd like to travel as a team, sounds like fun"

"More tournaments would make our sessions better"

"I'd love to see England netball games"

"Sports fun day!"

Whilst some of the older group participants who had previously attended a StreetGames festival or Residential spoke passionately about how much they enjoyed them:

"[The festivals] these were class...you see sports you've never seen before."

"[On Summer Camps]... people were buzzing over the Commonwealth Games events they'd seen in the day."

"These really allowed StreetGames to stand out."

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

In terms of holiday activities, young people shared their thoughts around the types of offer which were most likely to appeal to them and their peers. This included suggestions around the need for: specific activities for older teens that are provided separately to younger children – with opportunities to try new /different activities and attending training, consideration of activities for engaging females and the importance of food. For example young people shared:

“I don't want to be playing with people years younger. Age group activities are more appealing. ”

“ There is a transition as you get older where you don't want to mix with the younger ones, but knowing that there's coaching opportunities and such available to progress into may keep them in that environment. ”

“ Different areas do different sports, we're big on Rugby but we have no rounders, I'd like to get equal access wherever I live. ”

“ Food is a good thing....it will draw more people to sessions that may not usually get drawn in by the activities. ”

Some of the girls mentioned that sometimes 'open access' provision can mean that some 'girls miss out' in certain ways:

“ Everyone's different so it's hard to say, but summer camps are generally mixed gender and a lot of girls are less inclined to get stuck in. I enjoy sport so I get involved and I'm not a 'girly girl', so it doesn't bother me as much but I think other girls can be. ”

“ There is a large divide in sports in terms of what girls / boys 'should' (traditionally) play. Over holidays we could focus on more inclusive/open sporting environments.... ”

SPORTS PROVISION

In both the focus groups and the online survey, young people were asked to share their thoughts and experiences of wider sporting offers in their local area. Their feedback highlighted, that for some young people, there was very limited provision within their immediate locale, whilst for others; although there were facilities, access was often an issue – due to either: the pricing, the variety of activities on offer or a perception of ‘not fitting in’.

ACCESS

In the online survey **64%** of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that gyms are too expensive, or only offer contracts with huge commitments.

Similar views around cost and access were also shared in the focus groups:

“ I use the gym everyday but it is very expensive, but I find online workouts annoying. I usually workout alone now, as the classes I like such as BodyPump cost even more money. ”

“ I don’t think Leisure Centres offer much for young people, there are big issues around accessibility ”

“ Amateur football clubs around us charge £150 per annum and some families just don’t have that – it’s just not value for money... in Hexham there is an amazing facility but the kids can’t afford it and the green spaces are just being built on. ”

“ Leisure Centres can also be unwelcoming places for young people on a budget ”

*“ (At gyms and leisure centres)
Prices are generally expensive, subsidised rates would be good ”*

Distance is also a huge barrier for many, incurring more costs for travel and extra time out of their day.

“ All the main sports clubs are seven miles away ”

“ Local clubs in Coventry are far from the city centre so ideal for most, particularly students. ”

A lack of awareness/signposting was also apparent with around one-third of the survey respondents agreeing: that there are new activities they would like to try, but they don't know where to go and for some, there were fears around 'not fitting in' or 'not being good enough' to join a gym or sports club or that the 'formal' approach would be off-putting:

“ The gym feels quite a threatening place to go for our age, a leisure centre doesn't appeal to me either as its full of families and little kids. ”

“ For some, competitiveness may be off-putting while others love it, so maybe a divide would be good for people to play casually for fun and the other half with competitiveness. ”

“ The gym can be intimidating around massive blokes when you don't really know what you're doing. ”

“ Often their approach to customer service isn't the best... it's like they don't care. There is a need for more training for Leisure Centre staff – so they can provide the 'Right Style' ”

ADDITIONAL/IMPROVED FACILITIES

Young people were also asked to share how they would invest money in sport and leisure provision.

55% of the online survey respondents said they would add more facilities or improve existing facilities in their community to cater for more opportunities for young people.

Most commonly, young people talked about improving existing facilities and ensuring there was equipment available to make use of the facilities that already exist. Plus opportunities for female only activities:

“ ...having better equipment such as rackets and footballs...maybe a local hub with equipment hire. ”

“ Repairing our local parks and pitches. ”

“ I would give equipment to people who want to do sport but can't afford it. ”

“ Female only activities...some of my friends prefer to go to a female only environment – they feel more comfortable. ”

“ Variety of offer...not just the standard sports. ”

“ Building a new youth centre which will help reduce crime and give young people more activities and something to do. ”

KEY MESSAGES

All of the feedback provided by the young people involved in this research was extremely helpful. We plan to use their feedback to help create change through our own work, our work with LTOs in the network, key partners and the wider sports sector (and beyond). In particular, the feedback provided by young people has highlighted:

- The need to **build onto** and **enhance existing community assets** – both in terms of the physical assets such as parks and open spaces, the people who live there and their connections (particularly the community coaches, leaders and the young people themselves who showed a real interest in wanting to help out, volunteer and access personal development opportunities)
- Raised awareness and concerns around a deterioration in the **mental health and well-being of some young people**
- How important both **physical and mental health is perceived and role that sport** and being active can play in this
- The need to ensure that young people can access **local opportunities** to be active and for more things to do including:
 - The important role that LTOs providing doorstep sport activities play within the local landscape, the key role played by front-line staff within these organisations and the importance of supporting LTOs so that they are able to continue to provide sustainable offers for young people in low income areas
 - The importance of access to a **vibrant and varied** offer which includes year round provision and opportunities for young people to try new activities, meet new people and go to new places.
 - Encouraging a sector wide approach to more accessible leisure centres and sports providers for young people and families on a budget.
- The importance of providing **personal development opportunities** through sport, via opportunities to help out, volunteer, attend training, gain qualifications and routes into employment.
- The need to look at ways to improve issues relating to **community safety** and the potential role that sport can play with other key partners in helping young people to feel safe within their communities.