
1 Active Women programme

- 1.1 This chapter explores the views of twenty project leads who run Active Women projects funded through StreetGames. The findings from an online survey conducted by IFF Research in Spring 2012 with 86 StreetGames participants also feed into this chapter.

Project set-up and delivery

- 1.2 This section examines the motivations of projects for using StreetGames to provide funding for the delivery of Active Women sport sessions to 16-25 year old women. It also concentrates on the bidding process, project set-up and the extent to which projects deviated from the original 'plan' or 'model'.

Motivations for using StreetGames

- 1.3 Motivations for applying to StreetGames for the Active Women funding varied across projects. For the majority of projects the nature of the proposed StreetGames consortium fit their needs due to the small size of their own organisation. A number of projects did not have the infrastructure necessary to fully administer, promote and lead Active Women sessions and felt they needed an organisation such as StreetGames to provide support along the way. This support might be in the guise of marketing materials, training sessions delivered or networking facilitation for example.

I felt that as a relatively small organisation in the scheme of things, that their support and advice, their commitment to the sector – young people are typically more deprived – that it was pretty much a perfect fit to help get things off the ground. They were more applicable than some other agencies.

Obviously [the advantage is] there is a support system in place and they have a number of projects all across the country doing similar areas of work and you can hopefully take ideas off them and see what works in other places ... plus they do training courses which assist in your understanding

- 1.4 A handful of projects believed they were also more likely to receive funding through StreetGames than through a direct application to Sport England, once more due to the small size of their organisation. The nature of the StreetGames consortium enabled smaller organisations to take advantage of the funding available, and this message was clearly conveyed, at least to those projects who submitted bids to StreetGames.

Due to the nature of the funding, it being a national programme requiring major projects, as a small local charity it made sense to partner with a bigger player as opposed to applying ourselves.

- 1.5 The focus of StreetGames on 16-25 year old women was highlighted by a few projects as a motivation to apply for Active Women funding through StreetGames as they were keen to explore new areas of sport delivery. Branching into this new line of delivery increased the need for such projects to work with an organisation such as StreetGames which could impart their knowledge of the target group. StreetGames' enthusiasm and commitment to this demographic was also a huge attraction to some projects.

Targeting young women gave us another string to our bow and it paints us in a better light in terms of what we deliver and helps us engage with a market we haven't before.



They have the right drive and enthusiasm for what they do, to see a difference within a community. They're very committed to what they want to see achieved in the community with young people.

- 1.6 A few projects also mentioned that they weren't aware of any means of applying for Active Women funding other than through StreetGames.

The bidding process and deviation from original 'plan'

- 1.7 To apply for funding through StreetGames, projects were required to submit an 'expression of interest' before filling out an application form. In the main, projects reported this to be a straightforward process and, where elements were confusing, StreetGames were always on hand to provide assistance. Generally projects concurred that there was little else StreetGames could have done to improve the bidding process.

If you talked to StreetGames, they would put it into layman's terms for you; they could whittle it down to a sentence. They could get through all the technical jargon that was there for legal reasons.

- 1.8 StreetGames was generally felt by projects to be flexible in allowing projects to tailor the delivery of their sessions. This flexibility allowed some projects to make changes to their original delivery models as they were encouraged to respond to the demands and requirements of their target group. Indeed, StreetGames projects tended to fit broadly into two camps in this regard, with around half sticking to their original plan and the remainder incorporating changes, after consultation and agreement with StreetGames.
- 1.9 A number of projects decided to change the activities they offered as a result of communicating with participants and understanding what they would prefer. This process could occur both before the sessions started, in consultation with potential participants, or once sessions were up and running. StreetGames also offered flexibility with regards to the delivery timetable in order to ensure that set-up was not rushed and that only high quality sessions were offered. The format of sessions offered could also be changed, such as whether sessions were 'drop-in' or more structured.

There is a considerable amount of work around consultation, partnership building etc and looking at the programming before you can jump into delivery. StreetGames were happy for us to hold back from the delivery and were flexible with that in order to achieve the quality of work. They also made it clear that it was all about responding to the target group, and if participants wanted to try a different sport at any point then it would be fine to do that. And for us it is really important because if it is going to be a project for young people, there should be an element that it is led by the young people.

Effect of funding on activities offered

- 1.10 The majority of projects thought that they wouldn't have run sessions aimed at 16-25 women at all without StreetGames funding. For some, it was a demographic type which they had been considering targeting but needed that catalyst of funding to commence delivery.

It was an area of work that we considered. We can provide partnership funding, but that funding that was provided by SG made the project possible.



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- 1.11 A handful of projects commented that the sessions would have occurred regardless of the funding, but that the format would change, with for example fewer sessions offered, less focus on reaching the target audience and perhaps different sports.

It's a mixed gender programme anyway so the projects that are delivering for Us Girls at the moment were initially identified as projects that were working well with young women in the area so there would have been a level of female participation going on in the projects but not in so much depth or so targeted – a low level of it still continuing.

Getting more women and girls into sport is a general KPI for the borough, not just one related to the Us Girls project, therefore there is some core funding that is specifically for running women's projects. However, whether the projects would have been as extensive or varied, and whether they would have been free, without the additional funding, is less certain.

Support from StreetGames during set-up

- 1.12 The issues around establishing cheap or free sport sessions for young women, often from deprived areas, has been well documented, and StreetGames projects encountered similar barriers and challenges. These barriers included issues relating to childcare as well as the accessibility of venues and general financial obstacles. Reaction to the support provided by StreetGames during the set-up process was fairly mixed across projects with some reporting that the support they needed at the start of the process was not there. For example, while local co-coordinators are now in place to provide assistance to projects, this was not the case right at the start of project delivery.

There was a lot of support that was developed, like having the London co-ordinator around. Rather than having to go to a national team, we have a local one. Maybe things could have been improved by having that localised support from the start. But I suppose StreetGames weren't going to know then how much of a difference that could make.

- 1.13 Likewise, a handful of projects commented that more guidance on overcoming barriers to participation and engaging with local partners would have been helpful during project set-up.

We possibly could have done with more regular information on the ways other projects have got round their barriers at the start when we were newer to it.

- 1.14 However, other projects mentioned that where information was provided it was found to be very useful, both relating to marketing tools and financial advice.

A few incentives to start females at sessions like T-shirts helped... otherwise they supported us through advice and if you had any questions or queries you could drop someone at the StreetGames team an email.

We went to a meeting with them, met the team and they went over everything, the output, finances etc.



Recruitment and hitting targets

- 1.15 In their funding applications, StreetGames projects identified a specific number of participants they aimed to recruit over the course of the two years of funding. Some also set targets for volunteer numbers, as well as coaches and qualifications. This section considers the extent to which StreetGames themselves were responsible for setting these targets as opposed to individual projects, before moving on to assess the success of projects in reaching these targets and the barriers faced in recruiting participants.

Setting up of targets

- 1.16 StreetGames tended to exert some influence over the targets set by projects. Usually this would involve projects liaising with StreetGames to arrive at targets that met both the individual projects' capacity and the requirements of StreetGames.

We worked really closely with StreetGames to put together a suitable plan and proposal for our targets. The support I got from them was really good. We were in pretty much constant dialogue around it.

- 1.17 Most projects feel they are on track to reach their target number of participants, indicating that targets were set at an achievable level. Projects were more likely to have concerns over their ability to achieve targets where StreetGames had more involvement in setting them but this could be perceived positively, meaning that projects have been pushed beyond their natural inclinations.

I think the targets were a little bit ambitious, purely because it is sometimes a lot more difficult working with young women and takes a lot more time and encouragement for them to participate. But it is not unachievable; we're roughly on target.

Recruitment

- 1.18 The monitoring report produced by StreetGames 18 months into the two year delivery period showed that at an overall level 78% of the total participant numbers had been achieved, which indicates that project leads are right to be confident in reaching their targets.
- 1.19 StreetGames generally provided a lot of guidance and advice about promoting sessions (e.g. their "How to" guides).

They sent us out a How to Guide (How to work with young women) which I found useful. We changed our leaflets a little and now they are now more engaging and more targeted in terms of where they are located.

- 1.20 A handful of projects did comment that it would have been more useful to have received this guidance at the start of delivery as often it arrived too late. Additionally these guides tended to confirm that the approach which had already been taken was sensible rather than suggest new and innovative methods for attracting participants.

StreetGames have recently come out with a "How to market information" guide. I think if that had come out in the programme a bit earlier that would have been helpful.



They've released their 'How to' guides and address barriers to participation among this demographic. A lot of it is common sense and things we already knew about but it's good to reinforce it.

- 1.21 A number of projects however reported that StreetGames' ideas relating to social networking proved effective in boosting participant numbers. This was especially key given the demographic of the target group which is traditionally difficult to reach.

They provide really good support, good innovative communication methods, the way they've tried to use social networking mediums, organised and supported festivals etc.

- 1.22 StreetGames have also focussed much effort on providing suitable branded material to their projects. As the brand is geared towards the specific type of participants targeted this has helped projects spread awareness of sessions much more quickly. Marketing items such as branded t-shirts and banners have been distributed to projects. A handful of projects reported that they did not have the resource or ability to produce marketing materials of the same quality or quantity.

The branding benefit is quite unique as not all funders have this 'clout' associated with their brand.

- 1.23 The online survey revealed that participants were most likely to hear about StreetGames sessions via word of mouth (33%), online (28%) or from a poster (23%). The proportions of participants hearing about StreetGames sessions online or from a poster were significantly greater than the proportion of participants across all Active Women sessions (13% and 11% respectively), revealing the success of StreetGames promotional methods. That a third heard about the sessions by word of mouth shows the importance of being accompanied by friends in this demographic group. Indeed, around two-fifths (42%) of participants reported that they had taken a friend or family member to a session.

- 1.24 Projects had more difficulty recruiting volunteers than participants; at an overall level only 43% of the volunteer target had been achieved after 18 months. These difficulties led a number of project leads to have reservations about the sustainability of their project in its current form (as discussed later in this chapter). This tends to be an issue felt particularly by StreetGames projects due to the demographic of their participants. Young women appear to be less likely to want to contribute in a voluntary manner than older women, either because they don't have the time or because they would rather be paid.

We have struggled with volunteer recruitment. The problem is that if girls are into sport in that age group, they will already be studying sport or have a qualification and will want to get paid for their time. It's hard trying to find people who are interested who don't have the qualification yet.

The participant experience

- 1.25 The online participant survey produced interesting results that highlighted the benefits of attending StreetGames sessions.
- 1.26 More than three-quarters of StreetGames participants (77%) reported that they were doing more activity at the time of the survey than they were before joining StreetGames, significantly higher than the overall figure for participants across all Active Women projects involved in the survey (61%). Indeed, around a third of StreetGames participants (35%) reported that they had not been engaged in any sporting activity at all prior to StreetGames but were now participating in sport (compared to 26%



overall) 1. These proportions indicate the extent of 'distance travelled' by StreetGames participants and that StreetGames projects really are targeting those women who have previously encountered barriers to engaging in sporting activity.

- 1.27 Around a quarter (27%) of StreetGames participants reported that they had changed their eating habits to eat more healthily, while approximately one-fifth (19%) had taken up a sport outside of the project, illustrating the knock-on effects of participating in sessions.
- 1.28 In addition a high proportion of respondents reported a range of wider positive outcomes as a result of having taken part in StreetGames sessions, as follows:
- 95% had had fun;
 - 88% felt fitter;
 - 85% felt better about themselves.
 - 80% felt more confident;
 - 78% made new friends; and
 - 76% felt less stressed.
- 1.29 Feeding back on specific areas of the projects:
- 92% agreed that project staff were friendly and welcoming;
 - 87% agreed that 'they feel comfortable in the place where the sessions are held'; and
 - 78% agreed that 'the project was aimed at people like them'.
- 1.30 Evidently then, there are clear benefits to women's social life, health and well-being and of taking part in a StreetGames session.
- 1.31 It should be noted however, that while a clear majority of StreetGames participants felt the project was aimed at people like them, this proportion was actually significantly lower than the average across all Active Women projects involved in the survey (89%). When participants were asked how the project could be improved, the most common response among StreetGames respondents was to offer a wider variety of activities (17% vs. 7% overall). This illustrates that while StreetGames have invested much effort in designing promotional material to suit the target audience of 16-25 year old women, more could perhaps be done to ensure the activities within sessions are geared towards the preferences of this demographic.

Communication and Collaboration

- 1.32 A key theme running throughout many of the interviews with StreetGames projects was the positivity around communication with StreetGames staff and other projects within the consortium. This section explores in more detail the communication channels used, as well as the quality and quantity of this communication.

Network / Meetings (collaboration with other projects)

- 1.33 Many projects felt that a key benefit of working with StreetGames was their facilitation of networking between projects, with this being above and beyond what they would expect a usual funding body to deliver. Indeed it tended to be the case that StreetGames would rarely deliver project-specific

¹ Although it should be noted that this difference is not significant at a 95% confidence level.



recommendations, rather allow dialogue between projects to resolve any issues they had. Nearly all projects mentioned this facilitation as being an important factor in the successful delivery of their projects. The regular, regional meetings where projects have shared ideas about recruitment and retention were particularly valued, although there was much evidence of informal communication between projects as well (which is encouraged by StreetGames).

There are loads of projects in the consortium and that is helpful for our project through going to conferences and regional meetings and being able to discuss and share practice around girl-specific work.

After meeting with other project leads we decided we should include other sports as quite a few of them offered multi sport activities. There were very few that had just done one main activity, like us.

- 1.34 Some projects reported that the obligation for projects to attend these meetings ensured representation and effort from all projects. This attitude towards meetings enabled projects to get as much as possible from them.

At the last regional meeting we had to write down our strengths and weaknesses and then we paired up with people whose strength was the other person's weakness.

- 1.35 It was following these meetings that StreetGames collated "How to" guides summarising the solutions arrived at by projects.

- 1.36 StreetGames also puts on various events through the course of the year, such as conferences which engage projects with national governing bodies, training workshops as well as regional 'Us Girls' festivals to which young women are invited with the intention of boosting participation. Generally projects found these extra events useful although a handful reported that they had not yet attended any due to other commitments or a general lack of resource to facilitate attendance.

We always attend the regional festivals which normally take place in Birmingham. We attended the futsal tournament in February which was regional ... it was brilliant for the young people.

Partnerships

- 1.37 Projects tend not to rely on StreetGames to assist in partnership building with organisations outside of the StreetGames consortium, although StreetGames did encourage this practice. For most, this felt appropriate as projects could use their local knowledge and contacts to develop partnerships in the area. Some projects reported that they had plenty of pre-existing partnerships with local organisations so they did not require any input from StreetGames on this front.

We've worked with a lot of local providers: children's centres, faith organisations, local clubs, community groups, schools in particular, leisure providers. It has been quite proactive...I think facilitation is a local responsibility. I don't personally think StreetGames has the facilities, capacity or expertise [to assist].

- 1.38 A handful of projects felt StreetGames support would have been particularly useful to get larger, national partners on board. Sometimes this support was provided, however this was not always the case and seems to have been offered in an ad hoc rather than systematic way.



We have linked in very recently with the exercise, music and dance governing body. We were put in touch with them by Us Girls to send a couple of our staff on a street dance course for adults.”

They could have [helped] at a more national level. I know certain projects were contacting Slimming World and they could have contacted Slimming World at a national level and then fed down to the local projects.

StreetGames website

- 1.39 The StreetGames website was mentioned by many projects as a useful resource for them. All projects are required to upload their monitoring figures via the StreetGames website, which seems to encourage them to use other aspects of the website. Indeed, a large proportion of projects used the website to view updates on what other organisations in the consortium were doing, once more feeding into the knowledge sharing approach that StreetGames encourages.

We submitted good news stories that have been published on the site. We also look at what other projects have been doing, and steal people’s ideas. There is a lot of information on there and it is good to understand what other organisations do; their news feed is probably one of the most useful things on there.

- 1.40 Other projects reported that the research conducted by StreetGames and published on the website was very useful, as well as the online toolkits. These for example provided guidance and suggestions on the most effective methods of attracting new participants in the target group.

It contains marketing information and any research that they have done into what appeals to these target groups. It is a good resource to have a look around at and take ideas from.

- 1.41 Additionally the site’s links to national governing bodies were also of some value to a handful of projects.

I visit to get an update of new initiatives coming out. They have national governing bodies up there so in terms of opportunities I look to see if there is anything else I can forward to my projects – a new idea for them to try.

- 1.42 The only area of the website that projects felt could be improved related to the promotion of project-specific activities. Some felt the website could do more to advertise individual sessions to web visitors and point participants to their nearest local sessions.

General communication and support structure

- 1.43 As has already been touched upon, projects were in general positive about the communication they had with StreetGames. Projects have benefitted hugely from the constant support and guidance available when required. Indeed many reported that this level of support surpassed the usual support provided by funding bodies.

- 1.44 The impression received from most projects was that StreetGames staff were always available to help whenever there was an issue but did not engage in superfluous communication. Accessibility and approachability were key. This on the whole ensured a healthy relationship between the funding body and the individual projects as they respected the approach of StreetGames.



The offer [of support] has always been there but I like the way they work - they don't force things. Sometimes a partner will say you must do this but if your project is working there's no need.

- 1.45 Further to this, a handful of projects gave the impression that StreetGames were 'on their side', that StreetGames were there to support projects achieve their targets in order to reach the KPIs required by Sport England.

The constant support, constant guidance, constant updates [is important], and most importantly, I would say the guys from StreetGames are approachable. Even if it is something really small, they will always respond, and they say "if you have any more questions, just come back to me and we will solve it together.

- 1.46 StreetGames were particularly helpful when projects had complications regarding their monitoring forms. Indeed their monitoring process appeared to be quite stringent, carrying a lot of detail, but projects generally reported that StreetGames understood that small organisations require flexibility around such areas.

The relationship has not involved a great deal of contact, but they have always been really helpful, on the end of a phone / email if we have any queries or want any help with the monitoring forms which were the main difficulty.

It's been a positive working relationship with them. They are very stringent on their monitoring and evaluation, much more so than previous organisations that we have worked with. They have been flexible which is the main thing.

- 1.47 Conversely, one project lead did comment that the monitoring felt overly burdensome and time-consuming considering the relatively small level of funding StreetGames delivered.

StreetGames is a big contract nationally but for us [funding] probably doesn't even represent 1% of turnover. Sometimes we can't prioritise reporting because we have got other and bigger things ... time-scales and deadlines. They have to understand that for a lot of people this is not all we do.

- 1.48 Views on the direct expertise StreetGames brings to the process were fairly mixed. While some felt that StreetGames' experience of working with this target group was hugely beneficial, others believed that StreetGames were on a similar learning curve to themselves but still valued the role they played as a 'facilitator' of learning.

They offered us advice, such as reasons why women might be motivated/de-motivated to take part in sport. They were able to share their learning and their experiences from other areas in the country, which gave us potential ideas.

StreetGames' role for me is as a facilitator rather than giving direct advice. I think their role is not so much supporting us directly but providing a forum where all the different organisations can talk to one another and share their experience. As they have learnt, they have drawn up papers and research which they share across the consortium which has been interesting. But they



were't experts in this area of work at the start of the project, and they were quite open about that, so everyone has learnt as we have gone along, and StreetGames pulled it all together. It's been a good learning process for StreetGames and all the organisations involved.

Sustainability

- 1.49 The majority of projects did not envisage their sessions continuing in the same vein once funding stopped, unless they started charging for sessions. This was due to the barriers experienced by the target groups often being overcome by financial means (e.g. providing free activities and cheap childcare services).
- 1.50 Of some concern is the fact that the online survey showed that only two-fifths (40%) of StreetGames participants reported that they would be likely to continue with the same level of sporting activity if their Active Women sessions stopped. This was significantly lower than the average across all Active Women projects (62%), suggesting there could be some serious consequences if projects were to stop offering sessions without exit routes for participants.
- 1.51 However, while a few projects could not see sessions continuing without StreetGames funding at all, a number were hopeful of delivering sessions to a smaller scale or ensuring the legacy of the sessions remained with other organisations. A handful of projects intended to merge their sessions with other sporting activities they offered, while others were asking partner organisations to administer the sessions themselves or thinking of alternative funding streams to apply to.

We are planning to continue 90% of sessions. All of the Us Girls fitness sessions will have the Us Girls brand. Our fitness organisation has agreed that they will continue on with the brand and run these sessions. Also, they are willing to continue with the clients from age 16 to 25. We do get help from our venues – we have agreements with these venues that sessions will be sustained [once funding stops].

The main structure of the project would stop when the StreetGames funding stops but we are trying to develop the sustainability aspects of the project, looking at other venues and areas etc. We'll signpost participants to Zumba which occurs just after our sessions. We'll then also make links to external routes such as a dance programme – girls can get a qualification and hopefully lead their own sessions.

- 1.52 Some projects had hoped that volunteers would be able to continue leading sessions once the funding stopped; however, as has been noted previously, the shortfall in expected volunteer numbers has meant this option is no longer as viable as it once appeared.

If the volunteer programme were strong, it could be carried on with volunteers. StreetGames could help with a recruitment drive for volunteers and it could look at a volunteer pathway and make it really clear what volunteers would get from it.

We were hoping to recruit and train more volunteers and community champions to take leadership and ownership but that hasn't worked... it always seems to be males that are interested in volunteering and coaching and we do lack females.



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- 1.53 Additionally, due to the time and soft skills required to perform much of the recruitment, some felt that only a full-time, trained member of staff could execute this role.
- 1.54 A consensus among projects was that StreetGames could provide more assistance in suggesting suitable means of sustaining activities. While guidance appears to be in the pipeline, once more there is the impression that it might arrive too late, as projects near the end of their two year funding.

I would like StreetGames to come back with other ways that we can sustain the activity, whether that is potential funding opportunities with them or signposting us to other funders. I think it would be a missed opportunity to stop the activities for this target group.

We could do with more guidance and direction in terms of the project cycle and the sustainability of activities going forward. If we were given more guidance in advance as to how we can sustain and engage with people to start paying, then that would help a lot. StreetGames could also be more proactive in letting all the Us Girls boroughs know what other funding opportunities are available. It is really important for us.

