



MOVING THE GOAL POSTS

POVERTY AND ACCESS TO SPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABOUT LSE HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

LSE Housing and Communities is a research unit within the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the London School of Economics led by Professor Anne Power. CASE is a multi-disciplinary research centre which focuses on the exploration of different dimensions of social disadvantage, particularly from longitudinal and neighbourhood perspectives, examining the impact of public policy. We aim to understand the social dynamics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods; promote models of housing and neighbourhood management; develop ways to support community and resident self-help action, especially in social housing areas; and shape government policy.



WHAT IS STREETGAMES?

StreetGames is a charity set up in 2007 to help break down the barriers created by poverty and area disadvantage that prevent young people participating in sport. StreetGames works with local community organisations, sports organisations, youth clubs, schools and colleges in order to support “doorstep” sports – less formal, more participative, and more engaging physical activity, close to home and at a low or no cost to the young participants.

This kind of involvement helps young people become motivated, develop team skills, social skills, communication skills and ways of working with others in a team so that they can more easily progress both in education, in work and in their community. In these ways, StreetGames aims to combat poverty, exclusion and area disadvantage.

POVERTY & PARTICIPATION

There is a lot of evidence from many long-run and well-regarded studies that poverty and the concentration of poverty in disadvantaged areas hampers education. We know from many sources that area based deprivation has a knock-on effect on the local environment. It is strongly related to higher crime, poorer educational achievement, health problems, high disability and generally worse social conditions. Residents in poor areas suffer

roughly four times the social and environmental problems of people in more affluent areas. Unemployment is high, pay and work conditions are generally lower and opportunities more limited in poor areas.

The groups most affected are families (particularly lone parent families), young single people from a poor background who have experienced family breakup, and ethnic minorities who overall have double the rate of unemployment (14%) compared with the national average (7%). Low skilled workers,

young people and working age people of 50+, not in steady work, are all badly affected.

Families living in poor areas, usually areas dominated by rented housing and in particular social rented housing, face four times the number of problems (crime, environment or vandalism) and experience a high percentage of newcomers with constant turnover. Child poverty is heavily concentrated in the poorest areas. For example, 49% of children in Tower Hamlets in East London, and about a third of children in



Manchester and Birmingham, are poor. Overall there are 3.5 million children in the country in poverty. 2.1 million young adults (16-24) live in low-income, poor households.

In-work poverty is a particular problem. Nearly 6 million employed workers are paid less than the living wage – 20% of the work force. Nearly two thirds of poor children live in working households where work does not bring enough income to keep the family out of poverty. Low-skilled and low-paid work is often temporary, part-time or on zero hours contracts. Around one million workers are on this kind of casual contracts. Wages at the bottom over the last eight years fell by 8%, whereas wages at the top fell by 1% – a significant difference. Meanwhile

the price of basic living requirements – food, rent, heat and light – rose by 40%; energy prices have risen by 37% since 2010; and food prices by 44% since 2005. About two thirds of social housing tenants and half of private tenants receive housing benefit, with the poorest 20% of private tenants paying on average 55% of their income in rent. Private renting, which is largely unregulated and offers minimal security, is a major cause of poverty.

Many studies have shown over a long period that concentrated poverty in particular areas has harsh impacts on families with children and young people. It limits the level of outdoor activity; it restricts young people's access to local facilities and clubs, for fear of trouble and

peer pressure; it is strongly linked to poor health, disability, inactivity and weight problems. Low incomes also restrict the amount of participation in sport that children and young people experience.

Since the recession, incomes among the lowest skilled and poorest 10% of households have fallen, leading to even greater difficulty in meeting even essential bills and covering necessities such as food, electricity and rent. Many families struggle with debt, making small additional costs unaffordable. It has also been established that young people aged 18-25 have been the most harshly affected by falling real wages, reduced benefits, increased training costs, less job security and other factors.

WHAT IS POVERTY?

THE OFFICIAL MEASURE OF POVERTY COMPARES THE INCOME OF INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDS TO THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

A HOUSEHOLD IS IN POVERTY IF ITS INCOME AFTER TAX IS LESS THAN 60% OF THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR THAT YEAR.

13 MILLION

PEOPLE ARE OFFICIALLY CLASSED AS POOR BY THE GOVERNMENT

THAT'S
1 IN 6
OF THE POPULATION

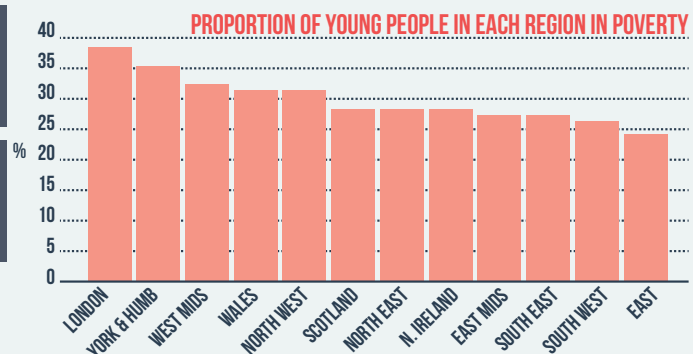


YOUNG PEOPLE ARE HIT THE HARDEST

30% OF 14-24 YEAR OLDS ARE POOR

3.5M CHILDREN IN THE UK LIVE IN POVERTY

YOUTH POVERTY IS GETTING WORSE BECAUSE WAGES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE FALLEN FASTEST, MORE ARE STUDYING & MORE ARE IN NON-WORKING HOUSEHOLDS





WHY FOCUS ON SPORT?

The focus on sport has several drivers:

- Firstly, it contributes greatly to young people's health and therefore their development.
- Secondly, it involves them with other young people in positive activity.
- Thirdly, it encourages concentration, motivation and other learning skills that help both their education and their working and social lives.

LSE HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES STUDY

LSE Housing and Communities has undertaken a study over the last year on behalf of StreetGames into the depth and extent of poverty in Britain; its impact on area disadvantage; how it affects young people and families, and their participation in sport. We looked particularly at why high poverty areas suffer such major disadvantages and throw up so many barriers in the field of "active learning", and whether informal sport and physical activity could actually help.

We studied five areas in depth, spreading from London to a Welsh mining valley, a large estate outside of Chester and inner areas in Sheffield and Bristol. We were familiar with all five areas that we studied: East Ham in Newham; Burngreave in Sheffield; Lache in Chester; St Pauls in Bristol; and Gurnos in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.

We interviewed over 60 young people between the ages of 14-25 and local parents in order to uncover what young people do, what they think of their area, why they play sport or don't, and what the barriers to involvement are. We interviewed around five stakeholders or key actors in each area, including

teachers and youth leaders, local councillors, leisure organisers and youth workers. We interviewed up to 10 parents in each area and around 10-15 young people. Overall we talked to about 135 people in the areas.

All of the areas are within the 10% most deprived in the country. Several of them are within the poorest 1% on particular aspects of deprivation such as income, education and health. The ethnic minority concentrations are high in the three inner city areas: Burngreave in Sheffield has a minority white population, St Pauls in Bristol has a large African-Caribbean population and East Ham in Newham has a white population of less than one fifth. In all the areas, social housing is dominant, although the right-to-buy has transferred a lot of the properties into owner occupation, which in turn have often become private renting. The three inner areas – Burngreave, St Pauls and East Ham – all have a strong mix of property types and tenures but are also dominated by renting.

Our findings reflect what young people of school age (14-18), and those of working age (usually 18-25) told us, and we report their parents' views separately. Young people did not want us to talk to their own parents so we spoke to other parents in the area to find out what was really going on.

KEY FINDINGS

A. Poor area conditions have a huge impact. Income poverty, lack of confidence and motivation, fear of crime, peer pressure, and poor supervision all act as major deterrents.

B. Young people like sport and outdoor games but there is a strong call for more informal sport, games and physical activity in order to allow the majority of young people, who are not the best performers, to go on playing without worrying about their abilities. Schools are very important in keeping young people active, and good sports programmes with good facilities and an active PE teacher inspire young people. Teachers can become very powerful role models.

C. Free provision through youth clubs are really important, but parents are invariably worried about area conditions and level of supervision. They worry about clubs catering for a wide age band, and often do not want younger children mixing with older children. They are afraid of bad example and negative influences.

D. Fear definitely dampens enthusiasm for using local parks or sports facilities, and for allowing younger people to attend clubs. It also acts as a barrier to older children joining in positive games.



E. Boys do look up to sporting role models. In sharp contrast, girls are far more worried about their image and their figure. There was a clear desire among many girls and young women for special exclusively female activities. De facto, young men often play sport only with other males, e.g. football, basketball and gyms.

F. Leaving school is a cliff edge for sport and for general involvement in social activities and clubs. Post-school, social networks become looser and friends tend to prefer “hanging out”, drinking together, smoking and in many cases taking drugs. These activities are frequently reported by young people over 18 as their most common forms of leisure, but by younger people too. Young parenting also acts as a limit on young people’s involvement.

G. The biggest barrier for over school age young people is **cost**. They like gyms and would go if it wasn’t for the cost barrier. They also like the idea of team sports but often there is a fee for participating and kit can become expensive. Parents have a slightly different perspective: they want their children to succeed academically and know that getting a job matters. They are generally supportive of involvement in sport and physical activity as they know it helps keep their young people out of trouble and motivates them. But they rely heavily on schools.



H. Community spirit matters and, in different ways, all of the areas have a strong sense of community. Most of the people we spoke to like this spirit in their areas, although some are worried about social problems and report high levels of disorder, antisocial behaviour and crime. By far the biggest recorded disturbance is antisocial behaviour.

I. The definition of local area and community is extremely narrow and this limits the extent to which young people will become involved. If sports facilities, clubs and parks are even half a mile away, this may be considered too far, the wrong postcode, or threatening. Area-based activity within concentrated poverty areas is therefore extremely important.

WIDER EVIDENCE

A. There is a **strong stigma** attached to large council estates, but also to ethnically diverse inner city areas. All five areas have a poor reputation and both young people and parents talk about this.

B. **Drugs, alcohol and antisocial behaviour** seem to be extremely common and young people and parents are acutely aware of this. Young people, after school leaving age, enjoy “hanging out” with friends. But parents try to prevent their school age children from associating with older children to avoid peer pressure.

C. In all the areas, **gangs** are referred to but only in St Pauls have gangs been a serious problem causing a rise in violent crime some years ago. This has now died down according to people we interviewed. On the whole, “gangs” mean that older teenage males spend time on the streets in groups, creating an intimidating atmosphere for families and young children. There seems to be very little actual trouble, although trouble is sometimes reported.

D. The **biggest public service problem** is the lack of supervision of parks, open spaces and streets – open areas are not well maintained, and parents are fearful of letting their children use public spaces. Charges for leisure centres and sports facilities (previously public) are too high for over-18s. Charges are at adult rates, and young people face poor work opportunities and are generally on extremely low incomes.

E. **Schools** could open up their facilities much more widely after school hours. Some schools do this. The school in Merthyr does an amazing job of engaging with the community. In one case in East Ham, Newham, schools cooperate with local clubs to deliver much more comprehensive sport activities.

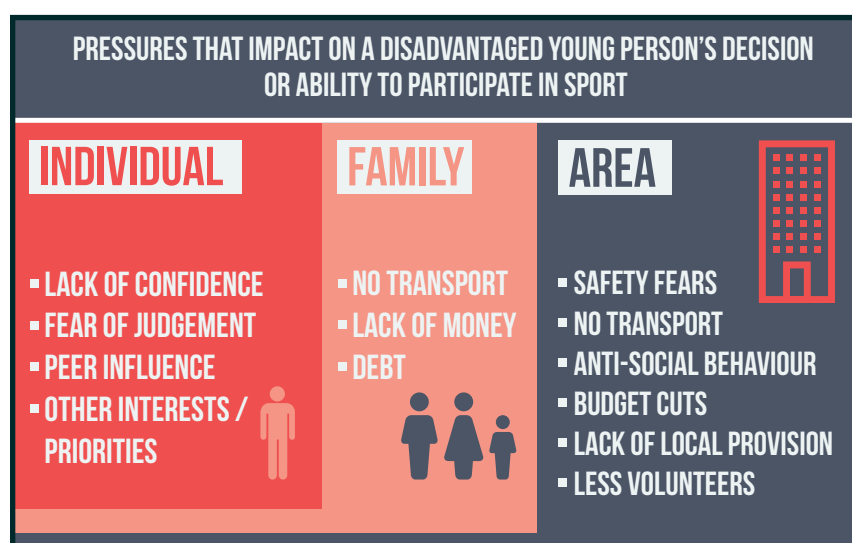
F. Both schools and clubs talk about **training volunteers** in order to involve young people in helping other young people as a way of motivating the community more generally. This already happens on the Lache estate in Chester with the voluntarily organised football team. This has a big impact on young people.



RECOMMENDATIONS

There are five main recommendations:

1. Having **more organised but informal activities** would help many more young people become involved in physical activity. One of the big successes for the young people who are most disengaged and demotivated is to take them away for outdoor pursuits and residential sessions which have a transforming effect on their behaviour, attitude and motivation. The role that outdoor pursuits can play in helping the most troubled young people is currently undervalued.
2. **Close supervision** of streets, parks, play areas, open spaces and clubs, is very important, particularly if informal sport is to take off and parents are to have confidence in activities, and young people themselves are going to get involved. Generally, they fear trouble and lack of supervision.



FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS

 <p>YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL EXERCISE ON THEIR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING</p>	 <p>YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE LIVING IN THEIR AREAS AND HAVE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY</p>	 <p>YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION SEE COST AS A BARRIER TO PARTICIPATING IN SPORT</p>	 <p>SOCIAL ASPECTS ARE VERY IMPORTANT (FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)</p>
 <p>YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ALREADY INVOLVED WITH A TEAM SPORT PREFER THE IDEA OF PARTICIPATING IN INFORMAL SPORTS THAT DON'T REQUIRE KITS, STRICT TRAINING REGIMES AND A HIGH LEVEL OF COMMITMENT</p>	 <p>A LACK OF CONFIDENCE, ABILITY AND FEAR OF JUDGEMENT WAS ALSO A BARRIER FOR SOME</p>	 <p>SOME CONCERNS OVER SAFETY IN PUBLIC PLACES AND FACILITIES THAT ARE 'NOT ON OUR PATCH'</p>	 <p>MOST POPULAR ACTIVITIES TENDED TO BE ACTIVITIES SUCH AS JOGGING, GOING TO THE GYM OR AN INFORMAL KICK-ABOUT</p>

3. There need to be **specific activities for girls**, and boys need to be directly motivated to get in to sport by making it less rigidly formal on a team basis. More effort needs to be invested in "solo" sports – jogging, cycling, swimming, skateboarding, walking – that lots of young people, male and female, enjoy, can do and talk about doing, but only like to do in social groups. These sports can be organised as group activities on an informal basis.

4. **Training for sport** could be offered in shorter bites so that more young people can become volunteers and helpers as they get older. This could be a way of keeping them involved.

5. **Targeted and government-backed area-based improvement programmes** to improve conditions make a measurable difference to all area problems – jobs, education, crime, housing, environment, social and community conditions. They should be urgently reinstated.

WIDER ISSUES

The wider issues we picked up from this study are very important.

- **Inequality** based on family background and area condition is a huge deterrent to involvement. Because of extremely low incomes, making low cost or no cost provision is key to involving young people.
- There should be more **area based programmes** to improve area conditions and tackle the inequalities that stop people becoming involved.
- **Young people** need to be involved directly in designing and delivering programmes.
- Therefore, having more **local training** for young people as they progress through school and clubs to help them stay involved with sport is very important. There are much bigger issues than sport at stake in low income areas, but sport is very important.

There is a **shrinking amount of outdoor space for informal games**.

It is harder to find spare land where children used to play freely and explore. Therefore, unsupervised public spaces need to be brought back under council management at the front line.

Cuts in local public spending are so severe that youth provision is one of the hardest hit and charges are imposed much more readily. Schools in many parts of the country are starting to experiment with the **development of free play areas within playgrounds** and the organisation of informal physical activity within school programmes by taking children into outdoor open spaces to let them explore the natural environment. This inculcates from an early age the idea that outdoor activity can be free and fun. Some of these more experimental ideas can play a big part in encouraging the kind of informal games that parents and young people want.

The overall levels of inequality, the actual experience of inequality and the lack of investment in maintaining area conditions make the work of StreetGames extremely challenging and extremely important.





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