

# Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 10<sup>1</sup>

## Doorstep Sport - building Sporting Capital to increase participation in sport – applying the theory to practice

### Introduction

This Resource Sheet<sup>1</sup> takes StreetGames 'Doorstep Sport Club' programme as an example to explore how Sporting Capital theory can help inform and shape the design and delivery of public policy interventions to achieve positive sporting outcomes for young people who experience particularly challenging social and economic circumstances in some of our most disadvantaged communities.

### What is Sporting Capital?

Sporting Capital is analogous to the theory of Human Capital and may be defined as:

***"The stock of physical, social and psychological attributes and competencies that support and motivate an individual to participate in sport and to sustain that participation over time."*** It is a theory that can help us to better understand and explain

sporting behaviour across individuals, communities and populations. More information about the nature of Sporting Capital and its important characteristics is provided in [Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 1](#).

### What are Doorstep Sport Clubs?

Doorstep Sport Clubs are focused on engaging disadvantaged young people (aged 14-25 years) in sport. Most of the beneficiaries of this investment will live in the most deprived areas – generally the bottom 20% as determined by the Government Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The ambitions for Doorstep Sport are large ones:

*"Doorstep Sport Clubs change the sporting and social landscape in disadvantaged areas. This is not just about sport; it is also about improving young peoples' lives as they grow and develop as members of healthier, safer, stronger communities".*

The clubs will be for the community - those who enjoy sport in school as well as those who do not warm to PE. They will be fun, sociable and have a strong element of youth leadership. There will be a varied diet of competitive and non-competitive sports. Talented youngsters

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<sup>1</sup> This Resource Sheet was prepared by Nick Rowe with analytical support from Oliver Norden at TNS-BMRB. It was commissioned by StreetGames and published in April 2013.

will be encouraged to join in the development programme of their chosen sport's governing body<sup>2</sup>.

## Sporting Capital and Doorstep Sport – applying the theory to practice

Doorstep Sport provides a unique and ideal opportunity to apply and test the theory of Sporting Capital in programme design and application. The objective of working with and attracting young people to sport in challenging socio-economic contexts lends itself to the particular insight and understanding that Sporting Capital theory can bring. This aligned with the objective to not just achieve short term shifts in behaviour but to 'help young people to stay involved in sport and get the sporting habit' is fundamentally what Sporting Capital is all about. So what differences can applying the theory make? This will need to be worked through with policy makers and practitioners as the programme design develops and is rolled out and as evaluative evidence is collected. However, as a starting point there are a number of areas where viewing the programme and its development through the Sporting Capital lens will potentially pay dividends as follows:

- ❖ In the targeting and recruitment process it is important to identify and understand the differences between young people who come to Doorstep Sport Club with very low levels of Sporting Capital, those who come with modest levels and those who come with high levels as the intervention approach will need to be very different for each of these groups.
- ❖ Young People with low Sporting Capital - will need a focus that promotes and builds self-efficacy, self confidence and potentially improves basic movement skills. The emphasis will need to be on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivational factors and on reinforcing social networks. Psychological factors related to lack of confidence, self-efficacy and negative body image will feature prominently in this group. The need for an empathetic environment and leadership style will be critical in addressing these factors. Building Sporting Capital in this group will be a slow process and they will be at high risk of an early drop out from the programme. Ideally they would receive one-to-one support and attention in the early stages – and would benefit from mentoring from people who they see as like themselves.
- ❖ Young People who come to the programme with higher levels of Sporting Capital may be participating at low levels because of negative external factors such as a lack of

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about StreetGames and Doorstep Sport go to:  
<http://www.streetgames.org/www/dsc/content/doorstep-sport-clubs>

opportunity with few facilities or accessible clubs in their neighbourhood ([see Resource Sheet 5](#)). They may face barriers relating to finance and cost – and this will be the case for many living in areas of multiple deprivation. These young people will benefit from the opportunity being made available to take part at a price they can afford. This group may include young people who have problems with authority and have had (are having) difficulties at school. They may welcome more structured environments – but ones that they are empowered to influence – and that look different from the more authoritarian social contexts which make them feel uncomfortable and where they find it difficult to conform to expected behaviours. For this group competitive opportunities and the camaraderie of playing in teams can help to sustain and further build their Sporting Capital. These young people bring with them an aptitude for sport and may respond positively to the increased status that participation in sport can confer. They are candidates for using sport as the hook to engage them in more pro-social and educational activity and to develop their human capital through the transferable skills associated with voluntary involvement in sport.

- ❖ Some projects may go for a mix of recruits with varying levels of Sporting Capital – but in so doing they need to take great care on how these groups interact and are provided for – the wrong mix can be counterproductive – the right mix can create empowered and positively reinforcing environments.
- ❖ Participation is invariably temporary while Sporting Capital is durable and associated with longer term engagement in sport. The focus of Doorstep Sport Clubs needs to be on building Sporting Capital and not on increasing participation per se. This shifts the emphasis from judging success purely by attendance (which is a necessary condition) to judging success by the quality of the experience and the increase in Sporting Capital that accompanies it (i.e. sufficient conditions).
- ❖ Sporting Capital is acquired through education and experience. Many young people in disadvantaged areas do not get the positive socialisation process that builds Sporting Capital in their early formative years. They may come to the programme with what might be considered a 'Sporting Capital deficit'. The training and quality of sports leaders, mentors and coaches will be vital to the success of the programme to help overcome this deficit. They should be well versed in the ideas behind Sporting Capital and confident in applying the appropriate techniques and styles that will match the Sporting Capital levels of the young people they are engaging with. Some leaders and coaches may be better suited to work with young people with high levels of Sporting

Capital while others may be better suited to engaging with young people with low levels – it is important not to assume that one type of leader or coach fits all.

Figure 1 provides some indicative guidance on the kind of response that may be appropriate based on an individual’s overall Sporting Capital Index scores. This response would be shaped and modified further based on individual Domain profiles and from leaned experience of what works.

**Figure 1: Guidance on intervention design referenced to individual Sporting Capital index scores**

Sporting Capital Index score	Description	Doorstep Sport intervention response
1	Individuals with these very low levels of Sporting Capital have a high probability of not participating in sport. They are more likely to be women than men, to be older rather than young and to come from lower socio-economic groups. They may have some underlying health problems and may have gone some time - in excess of a year for younger people and many years for those in older age groups – since they have taken part in any sport. They will not see themselves as 'sporty' and are likely to have low self esteem, and self confidence in relation to sport. Body image may be an issue for young girls in particular. Their physical abilities in sport will be relatively poor compared with their peers. They are likely to come from families that are not very sporty and few if any of their friends will be regular sport participants. They are unlikely to have visited any sporting venues in the recent past and are very unlikely to be a member of a sports club. They may find the idea of visiting a gym or sports centre intimidating. They may be a difficult group to attract to sporting programmes and will have a high probability of dropping out	This group is likely to be a minority amongst most young people – but are an important group for those concerned specifically with public health outcomes. They are likely to require high intensity one-on-one support with a focus on Psychological factors of self esteem and self confidence. They are unlikely to respond well to highly competitive environments and need a greater focus on task orientation and self referenced improvement. There should be an emphasis on enjoyment and fun. The initial introductory period will be crucial – it must be positive, non-threatening and rewarding. Positive feedback from project leaders is required. Building supportive social networks will be important. Group sessions should be with those on similar levels of Sporting Capital and single gender sessions are likely to be important for girls. Connections to other leisure and social activities where the individuals have greater confidence will help maintain involvement. Role models are likely to come from individuals who have started the programme with similar low levels of Sporting Capital and demonstrated increases. Success will be measured in terms of adherence to the programme and ultimately movement into a Sporting Capital level of 4 plus
2		
3		

4	Individuals with these 'moderate' levels of Sporting Capital are likely to be positively disposed to sport. They will have participated in a range of sports while at school – but many have lacked the motivation to participate regularly since leaving school. Some will have dropped out temporarily with an intention to get back into sport when their personal circumstances change. They will have reasonable levels of self esteem and confidence in sporting situations but these may be fragile and prone to setbacks as a consequence of negative experiences. They will be sensitive to external barriers to participation – prioritising other activities over sport and being easily persuaded 'not to bother to do sport today'. High cost (for them) and lack of access will be important deterring factors. Young girls in particular will be susceptible to peer group influence not to take part in sport. They are likely to come from families where at least some members are sporty and the value systems associated with sport are seen as positive.	This group is likely to be a core market for Doorstep Sport working in areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation. These individuals will respond well to barrier reduction – in terms for example of providing opportunities at the right cost, in the right place and at the right time. However psychological factors related to self-esteem and self confidence must not be taken for granted and require positive reinforcing environments for them to continue to be strengthened. This group may respond well to relatively low level competitive opportunities which need to be mixed with a focus on personal improvement and mastery of basic sporting skills. Some in this group will respond well to being coached and with the right support may be fast tracked into higher level performance programmes. Mixed gender sessions are a possibility – but should be with others on a similar Sporting Capital level. Building camaraderie and using existing friendship networks will be important for sustain the involvement of this group. Family connections to sport may be particularly helpful in recruiting those in their early teenage years. Success will be measured in the levels of retention and ultimately in terms of progression to the 8 plus Sporting Capital group.
5		
6		
7		
8	Individuals with these levels of Sporting Capital are already very sporty. They have a high probability of participating regularly in sport and to come back to sport following a short term drop out. They will respond very positively to barrier reduction such as low cost opportunities and increased access or improved quality of facilities. If they are not already members of clubs they will be potential recruits. They are also potential volunteers and should be targeted for volunteer recruitment. They are often looking for improved opportunities to take part in competitive sport and in leagues and tournaments. Those with the highest Sporting Capital scores (9 or 10) may already be involved in high performance sport, identified as talented and engaged in talent development systems.	At the lower end of this spectrum – a Score of 8 – individuals are more prone to dropping out if life circumstances get in the way of their sport. To this extent it is a mistake to take participation amongst this group for granted – particularly in disadvantaged areas where external barriers will often exist. Doorstep Sport projects should provide supportive environments that welcome the involvement of this group, to help build their 'sporting habit'. The focus for this group is on 'participation maintenance'. These kinds of individuals are a potential market for sports club membership and for recruitment into volunteering. Continued quality experiences will help reinforce their already positive attitudes towards sport. It is amongst this group that potential Olympic champions of the future are most likely to be identified.
9		
10		

The national profile data (see earlier [Resource Sheets](#)) provides normative standards against which both individual and project or programme aggregated statistics can be assessed. For example it would be expected, given the objectives of Doorstep Sport to attract young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and to work particularly to overcome social inequities in participation, that initial recruits would have low to moderate levels of Sporting Capital (Sporting Capital Index Scores of 6 or less). Any increase in Sporting Capital Index Scores for these individuals can be translated into real gains in terms of their likelihood of participating regularly in sport beyond the life of the intervention. An overall target might be set for example for Doorstep Sport to achieve Sporting Capital Index Scores of 7 or above for 80% of the young people leaving the programme. Assuming low average starting levels of Sporting Capital amongst all recruits this would result in Doorstep Sport making real and demonstrable behaviour change - and all the health and wider social benefits associated with it - for young people living in some of our most challenging community environments.

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<sup>i</sup> This Sheet is the tenth in a series of eleven 'Sporting Capital Resource Sheets'. The Resource Sheets are organised in way that move from the general to the more detailed and specific. The common thread is the theoretical concept of Sporting Capital and its application to public policy and practice.

Each individual Sheet has been designed to be freestanding and to make sense in its own right – the series of Sheets has been designed to provide a logical progression that builds knowledge and understanding about Sporting Capital, its characteristics, the relationship it has to participation in sport, its distribution in the population, its variation across different social groups and its potential to influence and shape future sports policy and practice.

The Sheets have been purposefully designed to be succinct and selective rather than long and comprehensive. Each should leave the reader with an interest to think further about Sporting Capital as an idea and what it may mean for their work in sports development whether at the higher strategic levels of policy making or delivering localised programmes on the ground.

All the analysis in the Sheets draws from empirical data collected by Sport England's Active People Survey (6). The analysis in these Resource Sheets is carried out on the household survey sample collected in APS6 (October 2011 to October 2012) of the APS6 survey period. The sample size used in this analysis was 4,527 cases. For more information about the methodology see the full Technical report available from StreetGames.

These Sheets build on earlier thinking and analysis in work carried out for StreetGames and available in the following publications:

Sporting Capital – a new theory of sport participation determinants and its application to 'Doorstep Sport' Nick Rowe, Sport Research Consultant, September 2012, A report commissioned by StreetGames

Part 1. What is Sporting Capital and how can its principles be applied to create a new generation of sustained sports participants?

Part 2. The Sporting Capital Index – exploring the levels of Sporting Capital in the English population and its variation across different social groups.

The following Sheets are available in this series:

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**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 1: Sporting Capital – what is it and why is it important to sports policy and practice?**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 2: What is the relationship between Sporting Capital and participation in sport and why does it matter?**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 3: Are we a sporting nation – what are the levels of Sporting Capital in England?**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 4: Sporting capital and gender – mind the gap**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 5: Sporting capital and inequality – does social class make a difference?**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 6: To what extent do levels of Sporting Capital impact on the frequency of participation and vary by the type of sport people play?**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 7: Sporting Capital and ethnicity**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 8: Sporting Capital amongst the young – a focus on 16 to 25 year olds**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 9: Sporting Capital - why it is important to public policy – a strategic perspective**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 10: Doorstep Sport - building Sporting Capital to increase participation in sport – applying the theory to practice**

**Sporting Capital Resource Sheet 11: Sporting Capital – testing and applying the theory - future research requirements.**