



Report Subject:

Young people's attitudes and engagement in sport/physical activity

Title:

Research study to explore attitudes and engagement in sport/physical activity amongst young people attending FE Colleges in areas of high deprivation

Background

The study was conducted by marketing agency, diva creative on behalf of StreetGames and Sport England between October 2011 – January 2012.

The study focused on exploring attitudes and engagement in sport/physical activity amongst young people (aged 16-19 years) attending FE Colleges within disadvantaged areas. It also looked to identify how best to communicate effectively to promote the benefits of sport/ physical activity and ultimately encourage them to take up and maintain a healthy level of physical activity in adulthood.

Students involved in the study were from a range of geographic areas across the country including: Chesterfield, Leicester, Durham, Sunderland, Darlington, Warrington and North West London; with the study looking to predominantly capture the views of students



on vocational courses, such as hairdressing, beauty, travel and tourism, mechanics and plastering etc.

The research methods included:

- An on-line survey (469 completed questionnaires submitted)
- 10 focus groups (5 male groups/5 female groups)
- 2 creative workshops (1 male group/1 female group).



Background Facts for Doorstep Sport

This briefing paper provides a summary of the key findings from the study. The full report is available to download from the StreetGames website: www.streetgames.org/youngpeople-attitudesandengagementinsport

Summary Findings

The findings showed many similarities amongst this group, with the Sport England Market Segments: Jamie and Leanne and not surprisingly some clear differences between the males and females.

Significantly, the research findings show clearly that there is latent demand amongst this group. By positioning the right types of sporting activities for the target audience in a way that will appeal to their motivators, we should be able to convert this latent demand into increased participation.

Current Participation

The survey results show that 44% of male respondents said that they take part in some form of sport/physical activity three or more times per week, whilst only 25% of females do so.

29% of males and 36% of females take part once a week, whilst 24% of males and 35% of females take part less often.

Table 1 below shows the types of activities which the young people are currently taking part in.

Table 1: Main activities respondents currently take part in

Activity	% Males	% Females
Individual activities (e.g. swimming/cycling /running)	47%	45%
Team sports (e.g. football, rugby, netball)	48%	17%
Keep fit/gym (including aerobics/yoga classes)	35%	36%
Dance (e.g. street dance/cheerleading/modern)	6%	17%
Martial arts	10%	1%
Others (e.g. walking)	18%	13%

N.B: Respondents were able to select more than one response to questions, therefore responses sum to >100%



Background Facts for Doorstep Sport

As can be seen:

- Individual activities such as swimming/running and keep fit/gym are popular with both males and females.
- However, nearly three times as many males (48%) are taking part in team sports as females (17%).

This was reinforced by responses which told us their one favourite activity. As Table 2 below shows, activities such as dance, swimming, walking and running were most popular with females followed by football 10% - with other traditional sports such as netball, tennis and badminton only being selected by a small proportion of the females.

Amongst the males – football was, by far, the most popular activity – followed by going to the gym, cycling, swimming, martial arts and other traditional team sports such as rugby, basketball and cricket.

Table 2: Favourite activities respondents currently take part in

Activity	% Males
Football	25%
Gym	7%
Cycling/BMX	6%
Swimming	6%
Martial arts	5%
Rugby	5%
Running/jogging	5%
Basketball	4%
Cricket	4%

Activity	% Females
Dance	14%
Swimming	12%
Walking	11%
Running/jogging	10%
Football	10%
Gym	5%
Horse riding	5%
Cycling/BMX	3%
Boxing	2%

Barriers to Participation

A lack of time/too much college work and cost are the two factors which are most likely to prevent respondents from taking part in sport/physical activity more often– see Table 3 below. However, other factors such as:

- Having no one to go with
- A lack of knowledge about what's on and where to go;
- A lack of confidence and concerns over their ability; and
- A lack of opportunity also play a critical role

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Table 3: Key factors preventing respondents from taking part in sport/physical activity

Barriers	% Males	Barriers	% Females
Too much college work	46%	Too much college work	53%
Too expensive	27%	Too expensive	34%
No one to go with	22%	No one to go with	27%
Too busy socialising	18%	Not confident enough	24%
Not confident enough	13%	Don't know where to go	17%
Nothing on at the right time	12%	Nothing on at the right time	16%
Don't know where to go	11%	Too far away	13%
Too far away	11%	Too busy socialising	12%
Don't have/can't afford right kit	10%	Am not good enough to play for a team/club	11%
Am not good enough to play for a team/club	7%	Don't have/can't afford right kit	11%
It's too competitive/serious	3%	It's too competitive/serious	9%

Comments captured via the focus groups emphasise these findings:

"If you go to the gym it's pretty expensive and you think 'well am I really gonna go that much for it to be a benefit?'"

"Swimming's gone up to £4 and that's a lot for an hour"

"I don't know how to get involved"

"I want to do the gym thing but I don't know how to get the slips you need"

"It would help if they knew where stuff was going on"

"I think people can be intimidated by those who are better at the activity"

"I want to learn to ice-skate... I would never go there because everyone is looking over from the balcony and I can't ice-skate so I don't wanna go there for everyone to laugh at me"

"I feel like everyone's looking at you. If you're chunky it's like 'oh my god everyone else is skinny'"

"If I had someone to make me then I would"

"If you're on your own you feel stupid doing stuff"

Given competing time pressures amongst this group, it is useful to understand their priorities. Table 4 shows that college, family and friends were the main priorities, plus hobbies/interests for males; whilst being active was only seen as a key priority for a minority (10%) of females and 22% of males.

Table 4 – Main priorities for respondents

Priorities	% Males
College	68%
Hobbies/interests	49%
Friends	44%
Family	43%
Relationships	37%
Part-time job/work	32%
Playing sport/ being active	22%
Shopping/fashion/image	5%

Priorities	% Females
College	77%
Family	67%
Friends	46%
Relationships	39%
Part-time job/work	34%
Hobbies/interests	20%
Playing sport/ being active	10%
Shopping/fashion/image	8%

Motivations and Requirements

Factors which are most likely to encourage these young people to take part in regular sport/physical activity include **affordability of sessions and ease of access** – see Table 5.

However, there were a many other factors which were also considered important, such as:

- Sessions which focus less on competition and more on getting fit
- A wider range of activities/alternative formats – not just traditional team sports
- A good instructor/coach
- Opportunities for social time to talk and meet friends
- Opportunities to learn new skills e.g. team work that might help with employment
- The provision of kit/equipment.

Plus the inclusion of music provides a real motivating factor.

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Table 5: Key factors that would encourage respondents to take part in regular sport/physical activity

Factors	% Males	Factors	% Females
Cheap to do	61%	Cheap to do	65%
Easy to get to	54%	Easy to get to	52%
A really good coach/instructor	35%	If sessions focused on getting fit rather than competition	26%
Wider range of activities	32%	A really good coach/instructor	26%
If sessions focused on getting fit rather than competition	27%	Girls/Boys only sessions	26%
If sessions included social time	26%	If taking part helped learn skills	23%
If taking part helped learn skills	26%	If sessions included social time	23%
If kit and equipment provided	24%	Wider range of activities	20%
If there were more opportunities for competitive matches	24%	If kit and equipment provided	19%
If there were more social leagues/fun matches	18%	If I could turn up changed or knew changing rooms were clean	12%
If there were incentives for attendance	14%	If there were incentives for attendance	11%
If I could turn up changed or knew changing rooms were clean	13%	If there were more opportunities for competitive matches	10%
Girls/Boys only sessions	4%	If there were more social leagues/fun matches	10%

The respondents main motivations for taking part were predominantly based around **fitness, fun/enjoyment**, weight loss and to feel better, although there were also respondents who took part for the challenge/competition or to learn new skills – see Table 6.

Motivations around losing weight were far more significant amongst females, whilst circa twice as many males as females are motivated by improving performance and gaining new skills.

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Table 6: Main motivations for taking part in sport/physical activity

Motivations	% Males	Motivations	% Females
To keep fit	69%	To keep fit	71%
For fun/enjoyment	36%	To lose weight	55%
To lose weight	28%	For fun/enjoyment	36%
To feel better	27%	To feel better	30%
To improve performance	23%	To challenge myself	16%
To gain new skills	22%	To meet friends/socialise	15%
To challenge myself	17%	To relax/as a release or diversion	15%
To train/compete	14%	To gain new skills	14%
To meet friends/socialise	14%	To improve performance	10%
To relax/as a release or diversion	8%	To train/compete	5%

Comments captured via the focus groups emphasise these findings:

"I think it'd be good if you made things fun 'cos then if it's fun and you're having a good time it takes your mind off it and you don't realise that you're doing exercise"

"I do it so I don't get fat"

"You can get good key skills from it (sport) and it'd be good to put on your CV"

"I'd feel more confident if it was only girls"

"You have a kick about for fun and meet new people"

"Trophies and medals – if you've got something to show for it you're more likely to go back"

Latent demand

There is clearly an interest in sport/physical activity amongst both the male and female respondents – demonstrated by the survey results which show that:

- Only 5% of respondents said that they never take part/not interested in sport and physical activity
- 65% of males and 64% of females said that they would like to know more about where they can take part in sport/physical activity locally.



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Most respondents were interested in taking part in some form of sport/physical activity in the future; with the most popular activities including:

- Swimming, fitness classes, going to the gym, dance, running/jogging, trampolining and badminton for females
- Going to the gym, swimming, football, running/jogging, cycling/BMX, martial arts and adventure sports for males.

See Table 7.

Table 7: The main sports/activities respondents would like to take part in

Activity	% Males	Activity	% Females
Gym	40%	Swimming	47%
Swimming	35%	Classes (e.g. step/tone/Zumba)	46%
Football	33%	Gym	41%
Running/jogging	31%	Dance	37%
Cycling/BMX	27%	Running/jogging	33%
Martial arts	24%	Trampolining	25%
Adventure sports	23%	Badminton	20%
Boxing	22%	Cycling/BMX	16%
Badminton	20%	Adventure sports	15%
Tennis	19%	Netball	14%
Boot camp style fitness	18%	Tennis	12%
Basketball	17%	Martial arts	11%
Table tennis	17%	Boot camp style fitness	11%
Rugby	13%	Volleyball	11%
Golf	13%	Football	10%
Cricket	13%	Boxing	10%

London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics

The London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics does not appear as yet, to have had a significant impact on inspiring participation – particularly outside of London. 42% of respondents from London and only 16% of respondents from the rest of England said that forthcoming Olympics had inspired them to take part in sport/physical activity. Discussions in the focus groups also revealed only limited interest, and for some a clear disinterest!



Communication

Although respondents in the survey stated that they would be most likely to look for information on posters and leaflets at college, discussions within the focus groups revealed that in practice – posters and leaflets were often not noticed or read and that there was a lack of clarity about what was on offer.

Respondents were **far more likely to attend a session if someone they knew recommended it or encouraged them to go** – with a lack of confidence being a key issue, particularly amongst females.

Having someone to go with and taking part in friendship groups was really important; with participants most likely to respond to word of mouth from peers or tutors, taster sessions and Facebook.

Plus for the females – taking part with their mums, sisters or other female family members was appealing – as demonstrated by the comments below captured in focus groups.

“If you’re on your own you feel stupid doing stuff”

“If you’ve got friends you can make it fun”

“It’s good to have a laugh as well with your mum sometimes and it’s like a good girly session”

“I’m joining the gym in the new year with mum ‘cos I don’t want her going on her own”

Messages which appealed most were often fun, short and to the point.

For females messages which most appealed emphasised the key elements of fitness and taking part with friends such as: “Get in shape with a mate”, “Join our class - It’s our duty to kick your booty”, “Do it together”, “Come with me”, “We’ll have fun” – with messages emphasising fun, variety of activities, women-only sessions, discount offers and looking good.

Females were most attracted to promotional images which included photographs of ‘real people’ taking part in activities with bright colours and clear wording, rather than posed models or urban style graphics.

The males liked images which used urban style graphics, adventure style action shots and eye catching wording.

The collage features several advertisements for leisure and fitness activities. At the top left is a vibrant, abstract painting with splashes of green, blue, red, and yellow. Next to it is a poster for 'Dead Ball' and 'Kick It' featuring a stylized figure and a 'Miss' sign. To the right is a woman in a black jacket holding a 'Dead Ball' poster. Below these are three more ads: a person on a trampoline, a group of people in a 'Landscape Work' garden, and a 'Shape up for Summer!' poster for a £1 per day workout. Further down are a person climbing a wall, a 'Zumba Fun Fit' poster, and a 'Ditch The Workout Join The Party' poster. The bottom right corner shows a Nike logo and a person in a white tank top.



Conclusion

The research findings, suggest that there is significant latent demand amongst these groups. From a behaviour change perspective, a significant proportion of the young people from the target audience are in the 'contemplation phase' of participation. Therefore, by positioning the right types of sporting activities for the target audience in a way that will appeal to their motivators, we should be able to move them along the stages to change towards preparation, action and maintenance.

The young males were likely to be driven to participate in sport by a mix of task oriented goals (skill development, accomplishment, affiliation and fitness) and ego oriented goals (social, status, competition and recognition). Therefore, offers need to appeal to young men's desire to improve skills, be part of a team and improve fitness, as well as taking part in competition.

The young females need activities which focus on social activity rather than a competition and consider involving friends and family members in sessions. As young women are concerned about their appearance (both how they look whilst participating in sport and how they imagine they will look as a result of participating) sessions should focus on looking good, keeping fit/losing weight.

In summary, opportunities which are most likely to appeal to this market need to:

- Be low cost/affordable (£2-£3 per session was considered acceptable, with opportunities for promotional and loyalty discounts)
- Be easy to access
- Be informal, focused on fitness/fun, with 'hidden coaching' plus opportunities for skill development, social matches/leagues for those who wish to take part
- Led by a coach/instructor who makes sessions fun, is friendly/approachable and that they can relate to
- Organised for them
- Include female only opportunities
- Include the provision of kit/equipment
- Consider the inclusion of music – which provides a real motivating factor
- Include social time

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- Include incentives to reward attendance, improvement and achievement etc. Females were attracted to loyalty discounts, whilst males were attracted to medals/ trophies to reward achievement and trip opportunities and residential weekends to take part in outdoor/adventure sports.

Implications for doorstep sport

Area	Suggested Actions
Doorstep sport basics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basics of doorstep (right time, right place, right price, right style) sport remain of paramount importance with this group – particularly ensuring that sessions are affordable, easily accessible and run by coaches/leaders who can relate to the participants and make sessions fun.
Programme of Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Coordinators need to ensure that programmes reflect demands for a wider range of activities. This may require: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linking up with wider sports providers/instructors ▪ Additional training for coaches/leaders in different sports/activities. ▪ The provision of demonstration and taster sessions as sometimes it is the non-traditional activities and/or activities with a 'twist' that appeal which may never have been tried before.
Encourage and develop a sense of independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects need to help young people to develop a sense of independence to assist participants wishing to take part in solo/informal sport such as swimming/running/aerobics and going to the gym. This may involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simply showing participants where to go and how to find such activities and where sport can be read about and watched. ▪ Physical visits to sports venues/leisure centres – to teach young participants how to use them. ▪ Liaising with leisure centre staff to help engender a welcoming environment for new/young users. ▪ It may also be useful to discuss with leisure centre staff the communication channels and messages that young people are most likely to respond to – ie word of mouth, Facebook and taster sessions.
Foster links with NGBs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering links with NGBs: many NGBs have developed new products aimed at appealing to the 'informal sport' market, where participants do not have to commit to the rigours of formal training, matches, affiliation and competition; such as Run! – athletics, Just Play – Football, No Strings – Badminton, Cardio Tennis or Back to Netball.

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Area	Suggested Actions
Identify and supporting peer champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The research data highlighted the importance to young people of going to activities with friends or in friendship groups; a peer champion could build this bridge. A peer champion is a local leader of formal and informal social groups. Peer champions do not have to be outstanding at playing sport, but they will be at the hub of local social groups for young people with a willingness to advocate the benefits of participating in sport to their peers.
Develop activity specific skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst it is important to provide informal 'join in /have fun kick-about' sessions within doorstep sport programmes, it is also important to provide opportunities for participants to develop activity specific skills. Suggested actions include providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured coaching opportunities; delivered via a relaxed manner, with participants given the opportunity to learn basic skills, build confidence and be able to put their skills into practice via a game-led approach and small-sided games. Setting participants skills or tricks to practice between sessions Recognition, rewards and incentives – such as player of the week or month Access to competitive opportunities - this may be as simple as internal round-robin competitions, friendly games or for example cross-bar challenges or penalty shoot-outs in football. Additionally it may include home and away matches, involvement in tournaments, festivals and local Central Venue Leagues. Thus providing young people with the opportunity to develop their playing skills, tactics and confidence in a competitive environment. Whilst also helping to get participants used to making the commitment to taking part on a regular basis, visiting new places and meeting new people to help build resilience and learning that in sport 'sometimes you win, sometimes you lose'. To facilitate this, coaching staff may require access to additional training/qualifications or support from experienced sports specific coaches. Courses within the StreetGames Training Academy can support these needs.
Provide opportunities to develop leadership skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects need to ensure that young people have the opportunity to mature and develop leadership skills and confidence through coaching, volunteering and devolved decision making.

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Area	Suggested Actions
Support young people to look for opportunities to join sports clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects need to support young people to look for opportunities to join sports clubs and attend events in their local community – helping them to identify where these are and how to join them. In addition where a young person has the skills in a particular sport and a desire to progress it is important to highlight the appropriate player pathways/exit routes. Signposting and follow up contact are important aspects of this work as are identifying the opportunities to create new informal groups e.g. jogging groups.
Increase motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects need to try and helping to increase young peoples' understanding of why a sporting and active lifestyle is good for them. Explaining the value of lifelong activity. Gentle health and lifestyle advice from coach/sessional staff can be 'drip fed' into sessions over a period of time and built into additional activities.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects need to use the 'right' communication tools and messages. Simply putting up posters and leaflets around college sites, is unlikely to successfully engage these groups. Having someone to go with and taking part in friendship groups (or with other family members - for females) was really important; with a lack of confidence being a key issue, particularly amongst females. Participants were most likely to respond to word of mouth from peers or tutors, taster sessions and Facebook Messages that appealed most were often fun, short and to the point and emphasised the key elements of fitness and taking part with friends

StreetGames

StreetGames is a national partner of Sport England and a centre of expertise for developing doorstep sport in disadvantaged communities.

The charity supports community based sports projects that deliver sport and volunteering opportunities to young people living in the 20% most deprived wards in the UK.

StreetGames works with National Governing Bodies of Sport to establish and develop links between community and mainstream sport. Recognised by the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games Inspire Mark, StreetGames is creating a lasting legacy of doorstep sport in the UK.



streetgames.org