



ZCU

Understanding the lives of disadvantaged young people

**Key findings and issues
to consider for sport**



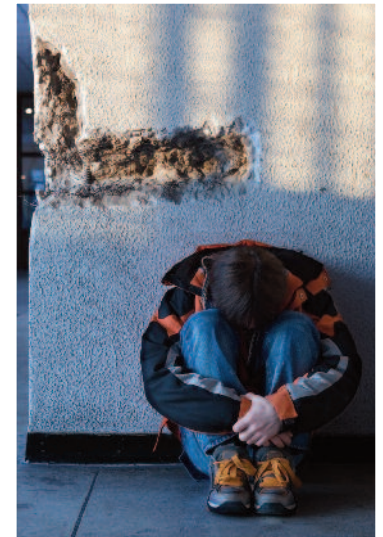
Understanding the lives of disadvantaged young people

Key findings and issues to consider for sport

StreetGames together with specialist youth research agency; 2CV recently undertook a qualitative research study to help gain a deeper understanding of young people living in areas of high deprivation.

The research findings highlighted that:

- Young people living in areas of high deprivation **feel that they are the same as any other young person in the UK** and their sense of identity is very much tied up in maintaining their role as part of this social group.
- They are **very much part of the 'brand me' generation** where the brands they wear, how they present themselves on social media and the celebrities they idolise are integral to their identity.
- While they are subject to much the same influences that inform the attitudes and behaviour of any young people, **some drivers are dialled up as a result of social and financial instability** and a desire to avoid being branded as 'disadvantaged'. These are borne out in the way they express





what is most important to them:

'I need to fit in': Everyone wants to feel as though they belong; **mobile connectivity and social media are key** to staying in the social loop.

'I've got swag': Owning the 'coolest' brands is of huge importance to avoid being branded a 'tramp' by peers.

'Live for today': An **'earn and burn' mindset is common**, with many living beyond their means to keep up, lending and borrowing amongst friends is common.

- What differentiates young people in disadvantaged communities from their peers is the fact that their **world is often limited** by numerous aspects of everyday life.
- Aspirations are generally high - but due to their 'limited world', **knowledge of pathways through education and employment to realise these ambitions can be limited** and there is often low awareness that they are already veering away from positive steps towards them.

The research findings can be downloaded here: visit www.streetgames.org/www/sgplus/content/2cv-lifestyle-research

The research further evidences the need for a doorstep sport approach i.e. sport provided at the 'right time, right place, right price and in the right style'. This research provides further insight about what constitutes 'right' for disadvantaged young people. For more information on the doorstep sport approach visit: www.streetgames.org/www/sgplus/content/overview-doorstep-sport.

The table below summarises the key findings from the study and links these with key issues and information that those providing or looking to provide sporting offers should consider when looking to attract young people from disadvantaged areas.

Research findings	Issues and information to consider for doorstep sport providers.....
<p>Every day activities revolve around maintaining relationships. Leisure activities tend to involve hanging out in social groups.</p>	<p>Right Time Leisure activities tend to revolve around hanging out in social groups - meeting in town centres or parks to 'hang out' and walk around together as they rarely have much money to spend.</p> <p>Time is often spent in fast food restaurants, shopping centres and listening to music. Outreach work, engagement and promotion in these locations can be an effective means of promoting activities to this target group.</p> <p>When teenagers and young adults are tempted into sport they want it to be part of their social lives - not unlike listening to music, going shopping or hanging out with their friends. They want their sport to be friendly and informal, varied and vibrant. To do this, sports providers need to offer activities that are relevant to these interests; are informal in style enable participants to 'drop in and out' of sessions and considers the importance of social time.</p> <p>This doorstep sport approach, suits the time of a young person's life - adolescence. It fits in well with their teenage lifestyle - their self-image, their motivations and wants.</p>
<p>Finances amongst disadvantaged young people are typically limited. Sources of money vary and are often irregular.</p> <p>An 'earn and burn' mentality is common - spending is prioritised on three key areas: maintaining their identity (e.g. clothes, accessories), socialising (e.g. food, drink, mobile phones) and paying off debts.</p>	<p>Right Price As finances amongst disadvantaged young people are typically limited and spending is often prioritised on areas such as socialising, buying clothes and paying off debts, it is essential that sporting offers for this group are low cost.</p> <p>Perceived value for money is important - discounted offers and vouchers can be well received.</p> <p>With varying and irregular sources of income, it is reasonable to expect, that for some young people from this group - attending every session or week may just not be possible, attending two or three times a month may be their norm.</p>

Research findings

For young people living in areas of high deprivation, their **world is often limited** by numerous aspects of everyday life.

For many, this can then mean that their horizons are limited on a geographical level, with **limited travel outside their immediate locale**.

Some young people feel that there are **few opportunities** in disadvantaged areas - where youth organisations exist they often can provide a **catalyst for involvement in positive activities**.

Maintaining relationships is a key priority for young people

Issues and information to consider for doorstep sport providers.....

Right Place

This emphasises the importance of providing local opportunities and the need for a doorstep sport approach to enable this group of young people to take part. Using local, familiar community facilities are far more likely to be successful at attracting this target group into sport than expecting them to travel outside their local area to take part in activities at specialist facilities.

The findings also emphasises the value of supporting and providing disadvantaged young people with opportunities to gain experiences outside their immediate locale. This could include opportunities to take part in social trips as a group, trips to spectate at professional sports matches or major sporting events or opportunities to take part at appropriate regional sports festivals, tournaments and events.

Right Place

This emphasises the need to provide more local opportunities and raise awareness of existing provision to enable young people living in disadvantaged areas to take part in activities within their own communities.

Youth mentors/coaches play a crucial role as positive role models. Doorstep sports sessions can provide a perfect setting for young people to mature and develop leadership skills. Through leadership and volunteering opportunities young people can develop their knowledge, skills and confidence and in turn, become positive role models and peer champions.

Right Style

Everyday activities revolve around maintaining relationships. Sporting offers for young people need to form a '*part of this*' rather than being something which is done outside peer relationships. This emphasises the need for sporting offers to:

- Be conducive to building peer relationships. This is likely, to require a more informal approach (*with hidden coaching*), so that it feels relevant to their wider interests, which tend to focus on 'hanging out with friends' and casual/non-structured activities.
- Be led by a coach/instructor who is able to relate to the young people who attend, makes sessions fun and is friendly/approachable.
- Include social time.
- Use social media to maintain contact and links outside of sessions.

Phone and constant connectivity is a life-line for young people - consider offering phone breaks within sports sessions and the availability of Wi-Fi at venues.

Research findings

Issues and information to consider for doorstep sport providers.....

Music in particular, is an important part of many social groups. The inclusion of music in sports sessions can be a real motivating factor.

Sports providers should also consider 'bolt-on' activities to sessions linked for example to music, beauty, art or food. See examples from the Us Girls Alive programme www.streetgames.org/www/ug/content/us-girls-alive

For the **males - taking part in sport and physical activity is often a big part of forming relationships and maintaining reputation.**

For many **females - sport is not a big part of their lives and many feel self-conscious** about participating in sport.

Right Style

We know from national surveys, that nearly two-thirds of young males from lower socio-economic groups take part in sport on a regular basis and that team sports such as football and basketball are popular together with more fitness based activities such as going to the gym or running. These study findings confirmed this together with an appeal for combat sports such as boxing and kickboxing.

Young males are typically driven by a mix of task oriented goals (skill development, accomplishment, affiliation and fitness) and ego oriented goals (social, status, competition and recognition). As such, sporting offers for this target group need to grow skills, enable participants to be part of a team, improve fitness as well as taking part in competition.

By comparison, only one-third of females from lower socio-economic groups take part in sport on a regular basis - with individual and fitness based activities proving most popular, such as going to the gym, keep-fit classes, dance, running and swimming as opposed to traditional team sports. These study findings confirmed this - with many females feeling they had 'missed the boat' if they were not sporty early on in school and fear being embarrassed. However, a key motivator for females were if their friends take part and dance was often mentioned and enjoyed.

Young females tend to be highly influenced by opinions of peers. Sporting offers for this target group need to be positioned as a fun and social activity, involve friendship groups, focus on looking good and losing weight as well as providing opportunities to improve and develop new skills in a non-competitive environment (although fun competitions could be received well).

For additional advice and support in terms of engaging young females visit the Us Girls website: www.streetgames.org/www/ug/content/home

Being part of a **social group is extremely important** to young people and is especially heightened to disadvantaged young people whose

Right Style

Sport can be an ideal medium for social bonding and providing a sense of belonging, but for some - it can make them feel isolated. As such, when providing sport to young people it is important to:

Research findings

Issues and information to consider for doorstep sport providers.....

home lives and finances may sometimes lack stability.

- Ensure that all attendees feel part of the sessions. Special efforts need to be made to ensure 'newbies' feel welcome, for example by 'buddying'.
- Allow young people to take part in casual clothing - don't expect them to take part in formal sports kit (where specialist sports kit or equipment is required, this should be provided wherever possible)
- Involve young people in the decision making.
- Strong branding and give-aways can help build a group identity and loyalty.

The research highlighted that **for many young people - living life to the full and having fun are key values.**

Right Style

The research highlighted that many of the young people 'live for today' and focus on having fun. However, for those from disadvantaged communities their funds to do this are limited.

Where doorstep sport providers can enhance their weekly offers with one off trips, unique experiences and events - these will be valued and provide a good means of building group loyalty and retention.

Brands are an ultimate expression of identity.

Right Style

Chasing the latest trends and making an extra effort to maintain how peers perceive them was strongly evidenced and particularly 'dialled up' for many disadvantaged young people as they struggle to keep up. This tells us the norms our target group want to model are those designed for higher income youth - this is surely a source of pressure.

Associations with sought after brands via sponsorship or through give-aways, can provide strong draw in attracting young people to take part in sports activities. However, it is important to balance this potential benefit, with the risk of perpetuating stigmas around those who 'have' the right brands and those who do not and also the potential risks of increasing the pressure to obtain key branded goods, which might be out of reach financially.

Conspicuous consumption is a feature of unequal societies and the drive to show off is not new, it has long been a part of working class life. For more information visit: www.conspicuousconsumption.org.

The research highlighted that **aspirations are generally high but knowledge of the pathways through education and employment to realise these ambitions is limited.**

It is essential that doorstep sport sessions provide positive role models and provide young people with opportunities to develop leadership skills and confidence through coaching, volunteering and devolved decision making.

For additional information on youth action and developing young volunteers visit the StreetGames website here: www.streetgames.org/www/volunteering/content/the-csyv

Research findings

Issues and information to consider for doorstep sport providers.....

As a result, **'signs of achievement'**(i.e. **money**) **become their primary focus and a powerful indicator of social mobility** as they lack the understanding of the vital steps to take to reach career goals.

The research highlighted that **'wider social' issues and concerns were often prominent.**

The research highlighted that 'wider social' issues and concerns were often prominent such as debt, mental health issues, being NEET, substance misuse, crime and anti-social behaviour. As such, local sports providers may consider making links or applying for funding to undertake joint-work with relevant local agencies which provide specialist support and advice in these areas.

In terms of community safety, carefully planned, doorstep sport can support reductions in the rates of anti-social behaviour and low grade crime. The provision of diversionary activities which provide alternative pathways to gang membership and anti-social behaviour and can help to guide young people through the 'jeopardy ages'.

By providing positive, organised activities, doorstep sport sessions can help instil respect through structured activity, clear ground rules/boundaries, shared goals and positive role models. They can also help to build resilience, self-confidence, self-esteem amongst participants and volunteers including positive rewarding (i.e. the promotion of key Protection Factors and reduction of key Risk Factors).

For additional information visit the StreetGames website here:

www.streetgames.org/www/content/stronger-and-safer-communities

N.B It is important to remember, that young people whether from disadvantaged or more affluent communities are far from one homogeneous group. This study looks to provide an overview of key factors affecting and influencing young people lifestyles, attitudes, motivations and aspirations. It is vitally important to gather local feedback on a regular basis.

