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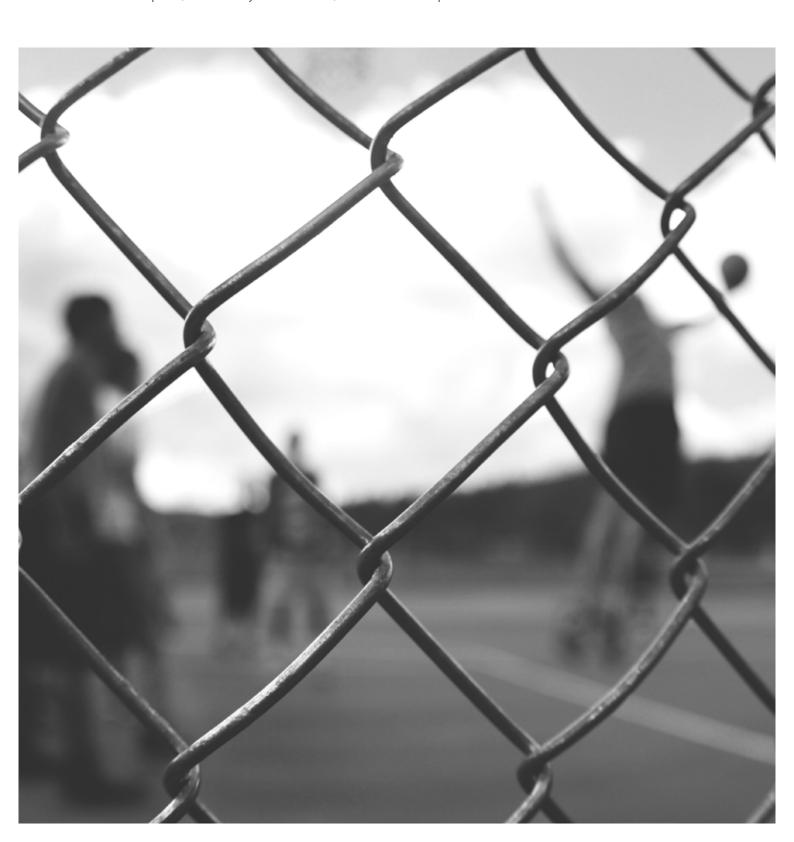# SAFER TOGETHER
## CREATING PARTNERSHIPS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

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# INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed in order to facilitate shared understanding between partners who are working together to develop creative ways to harness the power of sport to bring about positive change in the lives of young people who may be at risk of offending or who have already begun to offend.

Since 2015, StreetGames has been working to strengthen the links and relationships between the Criminal Justice and Community Sport sectors, to build evidence and understanding of how sport can play a more effective role in tackling youth crime and ASB. Derbyshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has been championing this work across England and Wales, and the current Phase 2: Safer Together Through Sport, sees partnerships developing across 25 other PCCs.

The Safer Together Through Sport programme has four aims

1. To advance the understanding and use of sport as an effective means to tackle youth-generated crime and ASB.

2. To create guidelines for effective Early Intervention strategies through best practice assessment.

3. To create a referral framework model that brings together the Criminal Justice and Community Sport sectors.

4. To support and influence smarter investment into youth & sport prevention activities.

The guide draws on academic evidence to examine:

> **WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE OFFEND?**

> **THE ROLE OF SPORT IN PROMOTING DESISTANCE**

> **EARLY INTERVENTION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF OFFENDING**



# WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE OFFEND?

## KEY MESSAGES:

- Offending is transitory for most young people
- For a minority of young people offending can be ingrained and pervasive.
- There is a lack of consensus about the reasons for offending but the link with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is increasingly seen as significant.

There are many factors that influence young people's behaviour and contribute to an increased likelihood of offending. These factors include immaturity, lack of self-control, excitement, money, inability to achieve goals through conventional means, and poor socialisation (McMahon and Jump, 2018). Other factors include drug use, antisocial behaviour, non-attendance at school, and breakdown in family relationships (Stout, Dalby and Schraner, 2017).

For the majority of young people offending is transient and declines as they mature. For these young people the best response will be minimal intervention, and engagement with diversionary activities outside the youth system that are meaningful, productive and relevant to the child's needs.

It is important to note that whilst the number of young people in the youth justice system has declined significantly, those that are within the system are the most difficult to rehabilitate (Taylor Report, 2016).

## Risk Factors

Risk factors have historically been used to identify which young people are most at risk of offending (see Table 1). Some risks are 'static' (e.g. gender, previous convictions) whilst others are 'dynamic' and therefore malleable (e.g. employment, housing) (Goldson, 2012).

Whilst risk factors are a useful way of understanding how young people come to be at risk of offending, it is important to remember that:

- The relationship between risk and offending is complex - not all high-risk children and young people offend (Goldson, 2012)
- The focus on individuals and their families ignores structural issues such as poverty and social exclusion
- A focus on risk factors creates a negative, deficit-focused view of young people. This can result in an adult-centric response aimed at reducing negative outcomes rather than a child-centred response that prioritises the needs of children and young people (Haines and Case, 2015)

Table 1: List of risk factors for offending (adapted from the Youth Justice Board, 2005)

| Risk Factors | Detail |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Family factors | • Poor parental supervision and discipline<br>• Conflict<br>• History of criminal activity<br>• Parental attitudes that condone anti-social and criminal behaviour<br>• Low income<br>• Poor housing |
| 2. School factors | • Low achievement, beginning in primary school<br>• Aggressive behaviour (including bullying)<br>• Lack of commitment (including truancy)<br>• School disruption |
| 3. Community factors | • Living in a disadvantaged community<br>• Disorganisation and neglect<br>• Availability of drugs<br>• High population turnover and lack of neighbourhood attachment |
| 4. Personal, individual or peer factors | • Hyperactivity and impulsivity<br>• Low intelligence and cognitive impairment<br>• Alienation and lack of social commitment<br>• Attitudes that condone offending and drug misuse<br>• Friendships with peers involved in crime and drug misuse |

## Protective Factors

In contrast to risk, protective factors have been defined as 'a variable that moderates the impact of risk factor of crime '(Craig et al. 2017). Protective factors are important in understanding how children and young people can be supported and helped to have their needs met (see Table 2).

As with risk factors, the impact of protective factors on offending behaviour is not well understood but it is argued that the positive impact of protective factors are inter-related and mutually reinforcing (Goldson, 2012).

Table 2: Examples of protective factors (adapted from the Youth Justice Board, 2005)

| Protective Factors | Detail |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Individual factors | • Female gender<br>• Resilient temperament and sense of self-efficacy<br>• Positive, outgoing disposition<br>• High intelligence |
| 2. Social bonding | • Stable, warm, affectionate relationship with one or both parents<br>• Link adults and peers with positive attitudes - model positive social behaviour |
| 3. Healthy standards | • Prevailing attitudes across a community<br>• Views of parents<br>• Promotion of healthy standards within school<br>• Opportunities for involvement, social and reasoning skills, recognition and due praise |

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) are individual, inter-related negative childhood events that exert a cumulative effect on the individual (Fox et al., 2015). ACES include: physical, emotional and sexual abuse; physical and emotional neglect; household substance abuse; domestic violence; parental separation/divorce; household mental illness; and a member of the household being in prison.

Exposure to multiple ACEs is associated with ASB, offending, and an increased likelihood of arrest (Wolff et al. 2015), and with young people becoming serious, violent and chronic offenders (Fox et al. 2015).

Protective factors such as resilience are perceived to be important in mitigating the impact of ACEs, and in reducing mental illness (Hughes et al. 2018), and also in preventing young people offending (Craig et al. 2017).

It is important to note that ACEs can occur as a direct result of young people being part of the youth justice system.

## Why do young people offend? – Theoretical Approaches

There are many theories that exist about why young people offend (See Appendix 1).

These theories can be grouped according to their primary concern:

• Identity: Concerned with changes at the level of the individual young person
• Behavioural:  Concerned with changing the behaviour of the individual young person
• Contextual: Concerned with changing the context and environment in which the young person lives

Sports-based interventions will vary significantly in the ways in which they attempt to bring about change across these three different dimensions.

# EARLY INTERVENTION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF OFFENDING

## KEY MESSAGE:

- Early intervention provides opportunities to promote positive behaviour and outcomes for children
- Interventions must meet the needs of the young person to be successful - inclusive, participatory and child-centred.
- Effective communication between partners involved in early intervention is key to avoiding misunderstanding.

Early intervention describes the process whereby young people at risk of offending are identified and interventions occur in order to reduce or eliminate potential criminality (Goldson 2012).

Types of Early Intervention (Stephenson et al. 2011)

| | |
|---|---|
| Primary | • Neighbourhood/ community approach<br>• Developmental services to improve the overall life opportunities for young people living in disadvantaged communities<br>• Viewed as a mechanism for long term crime prevention |
| Secondary | • Individual/ family approach, based on intervention<br>• Targeted at those considered at risk of involvement in offending, in relation to factors associated with offending |
| Tertiary | • Target intervention for those already involved in offending.<br>• Includes interventions such as anger management, behaviour modification, cognitive skills, relapse training, social skills, and victim impact etc. |

Case and Haines (2015) argue that interventions that are focused on the reduction or elimination of offending are problematic, not least because the success of such interventions can only be measured through the absence of outcomes – such as offending, reoffending, reconviction, and antisocial behaviour. They therefore call for interventions that promote positive behaviour and outcomes for children in ways that are inclusive, participatory and child-centred. Case and Haines (2015) argue for a twin-track approach that leads children and young people out of the youth justice system, and towards activities that build strengths, capacities, positive behaviours and outcomes.

The success of early intervention programmes is reliant on:

- Engagement - Young people's engagement goes beyond turning up – it involves a young person's 'motivation, commitment to, and participation in activities' (Youth Justice Board, 2008:8)
- Relationships between young people and the practitioner (Weaver 2011) built through continuity of staff, meaningful conversations, role-modelling, feedback, encouragement and a low ratio of staff to young people (Rhodes 2004). A good sense of humour enables purposeful and lively challenges (Visser 2003)
- Belief in young people's ability to change (Farrell et al. 2014)

Referral systems enable young people to be identified as being suitable for inclusion in intervention programmes. These require the involvement of many agencies and partners working together to deliver effective multi-agency working. Threats to effective multi-agency working within early intervention include (Minkes et al. 2005, Robinson 2014):

- Lack of involvement of appropriate staff in decision-making
- Power imbalance between agencies
- Partners bringing 'baggage'
- Conscripted staff rather than willing staff
- Lack of faith in the intervention by those who make referrals

Where multi-agency working is not effective, this can result in inappropriate referrals being made or referrals not being made. Effective Practice in using referral systems includes:

- Clear referral criteria to avoid potential misunderstanding (Minkes et al. 2005)
- Willingness for agencies to work together to avoid mistrust and misunderstanding
- Agreement on principles for effective partnerships
- Data sharing that is appropriate, proportionate, timely, and accurate (Robinson 2014)
- Clearly stated aims based on individual need
- Clearly defined roles indicating responsibilities underpinned by protocols
- Accountability to stakeholders (partner agencies, young people, families and communities)

# THE ROLE OF SPORT IN PROMOTING DESISTANCE

## KEY MESSAGE:

• The journey towards desistance is complex
• Sport can be a valuable medium for positive change but poorly designed interventions can make matters worse
• The concept of 'starting to stop' (McMahon and Jump, 2018) is useful for understanding the role of community sport in promoting desistance
• 'Hooks for change', such as pathways to education and employment, are significant factors for promoting desistance through sport

A focus on desistance within youth justice is a relatively recent development. Desistance describes a journey whereby an offender moves from being an offender towards being a non-offender. However it is important to note:

• Journeys are individual but many offenders are likely to relapse at some point
• Most desistance occurs by the age of 30 (Maruna et al., 2015)
• Desistance requires change within the individual and within the context in which they live
• There is a lack of consensus (and evidence) about how desistance happens
• Primary desistance describes a temporary halt in offending where young offenders may be 'starting to stop' offending (McMahon and Jump, 2018) whilst secondary desistance occurs in the long term
• Each episode of primary desistance will contribute to long term (secondary) desistance (Healey, 2010)

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## The process of desistance involves (Case and Haines, 2015):

• Prevention – offending, problematic behaviors (ASB)
• Reduction – including reduction of severity and/or frequency
• Promotion of resilience and positive behaviour
• Enhancement of protective factors

## What helps young people desist?

• Stephenson et al (2011) argue that a young person's readiness to change is at the heart of effective intervention programmes. (e.g. regret/remorse, desire to stop offending)
• Long-term meaningful goals facilitate a change in identity and provide hope for the future (Fitzpatrick et al. 2015)
• Involvement in community activities as a source of positive routine activity (Vazsonyi et al. 2018)
• Access to engage in prosocial activities: education, training and employment
• Interventions that build relationships with peers and family members involve engagement in the local community; develop young people's social and human capital; have a therapeutic element; and are culturally sensitive
• Opportunities to succeed and help develop a positive, prosocial identity

At its best, sport is a valuable medium for positive change but participants' experiences are unique (Sokol-Katz et al., 2006). Sport offers many opportunities to protect young people:

- Diversion into sport reduces time for offending
- Opportunity to develop stronger pro-social beliefs and positive values and boost self-esteem and self-worth
- Opportunity to develop personal attributes e.g. self-restraint, tenacity, hard work and teamworking skills
- Creates a sense of affiliation and belonging, leading to functional integration and strong attachments to coach and teammates
- Training rules regulating players' behaviour off the pitch deters delinquency
- Embracing values of sportsmanship, teamwork and delayed gratification can strengthen 'self-belief'
- Interaction with other peers who have pro-social attitudes, which helps to develop a young person's own beliefs and attitudes

## BUT:

- Sport can be a negative experience for some young people where they are humiliated and alienated as a result of failing (Sandford et al. 2006)
- Sport-based interventions which lack support and structure may increase the risk of offending (Abbott and Barber, 2007)

## Considerations for designing a positive sports-based early intervention include:

- Being tailored to the specific offender's behavioural and skill needs, and complementing their personal characteristics
- Multi-agency approach to broaden the offer of opportunities for personal, social, economic and educational development
- Attractive offer - engagement is important but high level of activity is not necessarily required. This needs to align with young person's identity (Nicholls 2007)
- Assessment of risks (e.g. through the Youth Offending Team's Asset Plus approach) has been proposed as being integral to intervention design (Stephenson et al. 2011)
- Challenging but realistic, therefore minimising the opportunity for failure (Nicholls 2007) in order to develop skills, self-efficacy and to revise self-identity
- Exposure to, and reinforcement of, pro-social values (Stansfield 2017)
- Staff who can adapt the programme according to the needs of the participants (Nicholls 2007)

Appendix 2 provides ten ingredients of a successful sports-based intervention, designed to promote pro-social development of young people.

# APPENDIX 1

## WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE OFFEND? – THEORETICAL APPROACHES

| Theory | Link with Offending | Role of Sport |
|---|---|---|
| Labelling Theory<br><br>Becker (1997) | Labelling young people as an offender amplifies offending behaviour due to young people being marginalised/excluded as a result of the label which reinforces negative deviant self-identity | Challenge the deviant label and provide opportunity for a more positive pro-social self-identity |
| Identity Theory<br><br>Stone (2016) | Offending behaviour is determined by an individual's identity and therefore desistance requires young people changing their individual identity to one of being a non-offender | Help repair spoilt or stigmatized identities |
| Social Control Theory<br><br>Hirschi (1969)<br><br>Complemented by Sampson and Laub's life course theory (1993) | Delinquent behaviour arises due to the attraction/excitement of breaking social norms. Formation of social bonds can enforce moral standards and reduce deviance | Provide opportunities for attachment to others, involvement in positive activities, commitment to others and shared pro-social beliefs |
| Social Learning Theory<br><br>Bandura (1962, 1977) | All behaviour is learnt through observation and replication of social behaviour – positive and negative | Provide examples of positive social behaviour – and sanctions for negative behaviours |
| Differential Association Theory<br><br>Sutherland (1947) | Behaviour is socially determined but offending results from lack of opportunity to pursue a more positive pathway to reach the same outcome as others | Enhance young people's skill and qualifications to enable them to access opportunities that are currently denied |
| Routine Activity Theory<br><br>Cohen and Felsen (1979) | Routine activities in social and physical space determine offending through interaction between individual motivation to offend, a suitable target and absence of a capable adult to prevent offending | Disrupt the routine activities that increase the likelihood of offending and replace them with routines that decrease the likelihood |
| Ecosystemic Theory<br><br>Bronfenbrenner (2005) | Young people influence, and are influenced by, a structured context (micro, meso and meta levels) that impacts on their behaviours | Provide opportunities for young people to challenge the negative contexts in which they live and access the more positive opportunities |

# APPENDIX 2

## TEN INGREDIENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE SPORTS INTERVENTION

'The offer to the young person' - Five Key Ingredients

| | |
|---|---|
| Right Staff | • Focus on young people as well as on sport<br>• Have authority but are not authoritative<br>• Staff (and volunteers) operate as role models and mentors, building long term relationships with young people<br>• Act as catalysts for change in young people's lives |
| Right Young People | • Projects need to have a clear vision of which young people are targeted and why.<br>• Group should ideally include young people (Like Me) who are similar to target group but who exhibit desired socially-acceptable behaviour.<br>• Reinforces positive values. |
| Right Style and Right Place | • Needs-based and accessible delivery.<br>• Environment that feels safe to young people.<br>• Based on clear understanding of the needs of the targeted young people (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, problem behaviour). |
| Rewards/ Rewarding activities | • Retention of young people is aided by rewarding experiences.<br>• Enjoyment is a form of reward but adding in additional rewards aids retention and can be used to recognise achievement and build self-esteem. |
| Attractive offer | • Engaging, high quality offer (e.g. enjoyable, challenging, energetic, varied). Organic and flexible to change over time. Recognises the dynamic process between the participant and the programme. |

'The Structure of the intervention' – Five Key Characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| Clear Ethos | • Mutual respect.<br>• Relationships based on trust, respect, fairness, voluntarism/choice.<br>• Sense of community. |
| Sustained Delivery | • Interrupted delivery impacts negatively on young people's attendance. Ongoing, open-ended delivery (or identified and accessible exit routes identified) encourages long-term retention. |
| Multi-agent/ Partnerships | • Increases chance of engaging the 'right' young people (i.e. those the project is intended to impact on)<br>• Can build trust between young people and institutions such as schools/colleges and the police, and facilitate the improvement of young people's skills, qualifications and behaviours.<br>• Partnerships can also enhance access to stable resources in order to sustain delivery. |
| Personal development opportunities | • Can be formal or informal opportunities.<br>• Focus on self-esteem, locus of control, and cognitive skills that enable young people to take on greater challenges.<br>• Also a clear focus on health, welfare and education. |
| Positive Pathway | • Provide opportunities for young people to adopt a positive direction in their life. Pathway to health/work. |

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