



SAFE, FIT AND WELL

Summary Report



Delivery Partners



Research Partner



Funding Partners





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ABOUT STREETGAMES

StreetGames is one of the nation's leading 'sport for development' charities: changing lives and transforming communities through the power of sport. The work that we do helps to make disadvantaged young people and their communities healthier, safer, and more successful.

What began with 29 pioneering community sport providers now reaches over 4,000 communities, through over 1,000 locally trusted organisations. These groups are the lifeblood of their neighbourhoods – trusted by their communities to deliver sporting opportunity and physical activity at the right time, in the right place, at the right price, by the right people and in the right style. In the last decade we've worked with over half a million young people to develop an active lifestyle. Over the last five we've enabled 75,000 young people to attend major events and residential sports camps and trained an additional 25,000 to become coaches and activators in their own communities.



SAFE, FIT AND WELL

Safe, Fit and Well is a research programme, launched by StreetGames in 2017. It was designed to support community coaches and leaders to effectively and expertly address mental health and wellbeing issues presented by young people taking part in community-based sport projects and to explore the connections between young people's mental health and participation in sport.

HEADLINES

'Meaningful positive change' in wellbeing recorded by 102 of 184 participants.

Clear potential for community sport to enhance mental health and wellbeing.

Peer-to-peer support provides a medium for supporting young people's mental wellbeing.

A skilled and knowledgeable workforce is essential to designing, delivering and evaluating 'community sport for mental wellbeing' programmes.

THANK YOU

StreetGames would like to say a huge thank you to the seven community organisations – their staff, volunteers and young people involved in this study. Without their enthusiasm and hard work this project would not have gone ahead. **Thank you – Chapter 1 and the Salvation Army Housing Association, Fitness In Mind™, Leeds City College, Pat Benson Boxing Academy (Birmingham), Positive Futures (Wirral Borough Council), Tyne Metropolitan College and Warrington Wolves Charitable Foundation.**

We would also like to thank Professor Louise Mansfield and Dr. Alistair John from Brunel University for undertaking the case study research for this project and their invaluable support and expertise throughout the process.

And finally, many thanks to the organisations that support this project with funding, including the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Souter Charitable Trusts and Sport England.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Young people growing up in disadvantaged areas live complex lives, facing multiple challenges on a daily basis. As a result, they experience mental health problems, including stress and anxiety, at three times the rate of their better off peers. Rooted in social inequalities, the problem is complex and one that affects all of society.

When young people struggle with stress or anxiety, who is best placed to help? Doctors and health professionals are not always the first port of call. In fact, young people are more likely to seek help from their peers, the internet, parents or other trusted adults such as teachers, youth workers or, most relevantly for this study, sports coaches. Given that 4.35 million 14-25 year olds in England play organised sport once per week and being active is proven to contribute to positive wellbeing, it makes sense to explore what role, if any, structured sport plays in protecting and improving young people's mental health.

Why is this important? We know that one in ten young people aged 11-15 has a diagnosable, emotional, behavioural or hyperactivity disorder. Socio-economics skew this statistic: disadvantaged teenagers experience mental disorders at three times the rate of their better off peers.

Untreated, mental illness causes distress and impacts on schooling, friendships and physical health. The problem is chronic: the onset of half of all long-term mental illnesses in adulthood happens by the age of 14, and three quarters by the age of 25. This is the strongest case of all for acting early, building the resilience of young people to stay physically and mentally healthy in the first place, and intervening quickly and effectively when problems do arise.

In April 2016, at the StreetGames National Conference, organisations within the network asked for help in responding effectively and expertly to mental health and wellbeing issues presented by young people taking part in Doorstep Sport projects. Community sports coaches and leaders told StreetGames that they saw signs of mental health problems amongst young people on a daily basis, but lacked the confidence or knowledge to act.

The first step involved undertaking a consultation and scoping review to explore the evidence, Re: the value of sport to wellbeing and good mental health. The [review](#) which was carried out by the Association for Young People's Health (AYPH) in 2016 showed "positive but limited" data connecting sport and organised activity with mental health outcomes for young people.

Intuition, grey literature and professional expertise also indicate a connection but insufficient research has taken place to define it. Consultation with practitioners and policy makers in May 2016, including Public Health England, NHS England, NGBs and local authorities, resulted in a short list of recommendations for good practice, which included the needs:

- To invest in coach and volunteer capacity, particularly mental health first aid training.
- For training and mentoring for peer champions, as it is peers to whom young people turn first for support.
- To create referral pathways for the most vulnerable young people through partnerships with CAMHS, Youth Offending Teams and GPs.
- To work together as an industry to share knowledge and research and fill the gaps in the evidence.

These recommendations were used to build the Safe Fit & Well programme.

What is

SAFE,

FIT AND

WELL?



Safe, Fit and Well was designed by StreetGames as a research programme and was launched in 2017, through funding provided by the Garfield Weston Foundation, Souter Charitable Trust and Sport England.

It was designed to support community coaches and leaders to promote mental fitness and address mental health and wellbeing issues presented by young people taking part in Doorstep Sport projects and to explore the connections between young people's mental health and participation in sport.

Pilot Projects

Between February 2017 and May 2018, seven organisations in the StreetGames network took part in this pilot project comprising:

- Chapter 1 and the Salvation Army Housing Association (Salford)
- Fitness In Mind™ Brentwood
- Leeds City College
- Pat Benson Boxing Academy (Birmingham)
- Positive Futures (Wirral Borough Council)
- Tyne Metropolitan College
- Warrington Wolves Charitable Foundation

Each organisation provided weekly Doorstep Sport sessions for young people. Organisations provided a wide variety of activities, spanning both multi-sport and single sports sessions including: **football, rugby league, boxing, boxercise, golf, foot-golf, boccia, dodgeball, volleyball, basketball, indoor cycling, road cycling, mountain biking, road running, table tennis, mixed martial arts, circuit training, gym-based fitness classes, pilates and yoga.**

Key features of the delivery were regular weekly Doorstep Sport sessions - delivered in accessible venues by expert staff with recognition of the value of peer support. The precise nature of each Doorstep Sport offer was based on tailoring the project to the needs and desires of the young people taking part, the social context in which sport was being delivered, and the facilities and funding available to delivery organisations.

StreetGames Support

To support local organisations delivering Safe, Fit and Well, StreetGames provided:

- A forum to discuss the design, delivery and evaluation of the projects through an Action Learning Set.
- One-to-one support from the specialist StreetGames Mental Health Adviser.
- Mental health and wellbeing training for sports deliverers and peer supporters including: Mental Health First Aid for coaches and volunteers and Young Health Champion training and Level 2 qualification (Royal Society for Public Health) to create young peer champions.
- Monitoring and evaluation training and support to use the Views monitoring system and Shared evaluation methods, including baseline and follow-up data using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS).
- Creation of local, referral and signposting pathways, into and out of the sports sessions.



Training

The provision of mental health and wellbeing training for sports deliverers and peer supporters was a key element of the programme. This included opportunities to attend: Mental Health First Aid training and Level 2 qualification Royal Society for Public Health to create young peer champions. Feedback showed that this provision was highly valued:

"Since we've been involved in the [Safe, Fit and Well] project with StreetGames, we received a mental health first aid course [...] and it was really beneficial and there was a lot that we learned [...] especially the apprentices who are delivering and working with the learners and they're a similar age to the learners". (Project Lead)

"The training provision has been honestly invaluable, especially the mental health first aid stuff". (Project Leader)

Pilot organisations had the opportunity to receive training workshops locally, plus the opportunity for Doorstep Sport participants and young coaches to attend a four day residential event at Brathay Hall in the Lake District in November 2017 – which was **attended by 19 young people**.

The Residential included delivery of the Level 2 Royal Society for Public Health Young Health Champion (YHC) award together with opportunities to also take part in outdoor recreation activities including: raft-building, tandem high ropewalking, morning Tai Chi and a night-time hill climb and opportunities to engage with, and learn from other young people in an inclusive and relatively informal setting.



The participants highlighted the blending of classroom and outdoor recreation as key elements for creating opportunities to engage with, and learn from other young people in an inclusive and relatively informal setting:

"The classroom, the activities, and the whole thing itself I found really good for like self-development [...] because each day to just reflect on everything, you've got so many different sides to it [the training], you've got the social side, you've got the physical side, you've got the classroom side [...] you're out of your comfort zone". (Young Health Champion)

"I feel like after I've done something like this, and I've met loads of new people and pushed myself out my comfort zone, like I'm doing a bit better [...] it gives me more confidence to go out and do activities". (Young Health Champion)



33 LEARNERS
MHFA

19 LEARNERS
YHC





Learning

To support learning and evidence gathering from this Safe, Fit and Well pilot, StreetGames commissioned Brunel University London to undertake research between February 2017 and May 2018, to gather learning and produce case studies from the programme. In particular, the research study looked:

- To gain a deeper understanding of the role of Doorstep Sport in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people through sport in disadvantaged communities.
- To contribute to the evidence base and disseminate practical and insightful learning about the impact of Doorstep Sport in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people through sport in disadvantaged communities.

The key findings from the research study have been included within this summary document. However, a copy of the **full research report** prepared by Brunel University is available to download here:

CLICK  OR... SCAN 

The research study also included the creation of individual project case studies and cross-sector case studies which draw together findings from the Safe, Fit and Well pilot projects lead by organisation type. The **case studies** are available to download here:

CLICK  OR... SCAN 



WHAT WERE

THE FINDINGS?

Headline Data

BETWEEN
FEBRUARY 2017 AND APRIL 2018

196

SPORT SESSIONS WERE DELIVERED
TO A TOTAL OF

337	1,944
participants	attendances

The monitoring data showed that 67% of participants were male and 33% were female. 10% were aged 14-15 years, 43% were aged 16-19 years and 47% were aged 20+ years.



Young Persons Feedback

'Have Your Say...' participant feedback postcards collected by Brunel University as part of the case study research highlighted what the young people enjoyed most about attending the sessions - all of which they connected to a sense of improved wellbeing. The aspects mentioned most frequently were typically focused on:

The opportunities that the Doorstep Sport sessions provided for **socialising with their friends**, meeting people and experiencing pleasure through taking part in sport and physical activity.

The variety of sports and the low or no cost programming (which was significant in their engagement).

Being **physically active** through sport and developing healthy behaviours.

The **ability to choose** which activities they took part in. They identified **tailored, low cost** and extended sessions as important to them.

The opportunities for **learning new skills.**

The word cloud below summarises what participants said they enjoyed most about the sessions.



Impact on wellbeing

To evaluate the impact of the programme on wellbeing, the pilot projects were encouraged to use the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS).

WEWMB is a tool that was designed by Warwick and Edinburgh Universities to enable the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing.

It involves asking participants to undertake a survey that asks about their thoughts and feelings over the past two weeks. It includes 14 statements which participants are asked to respond to, via a tick box rating scale and is suitable for use with people aged 13+ years.

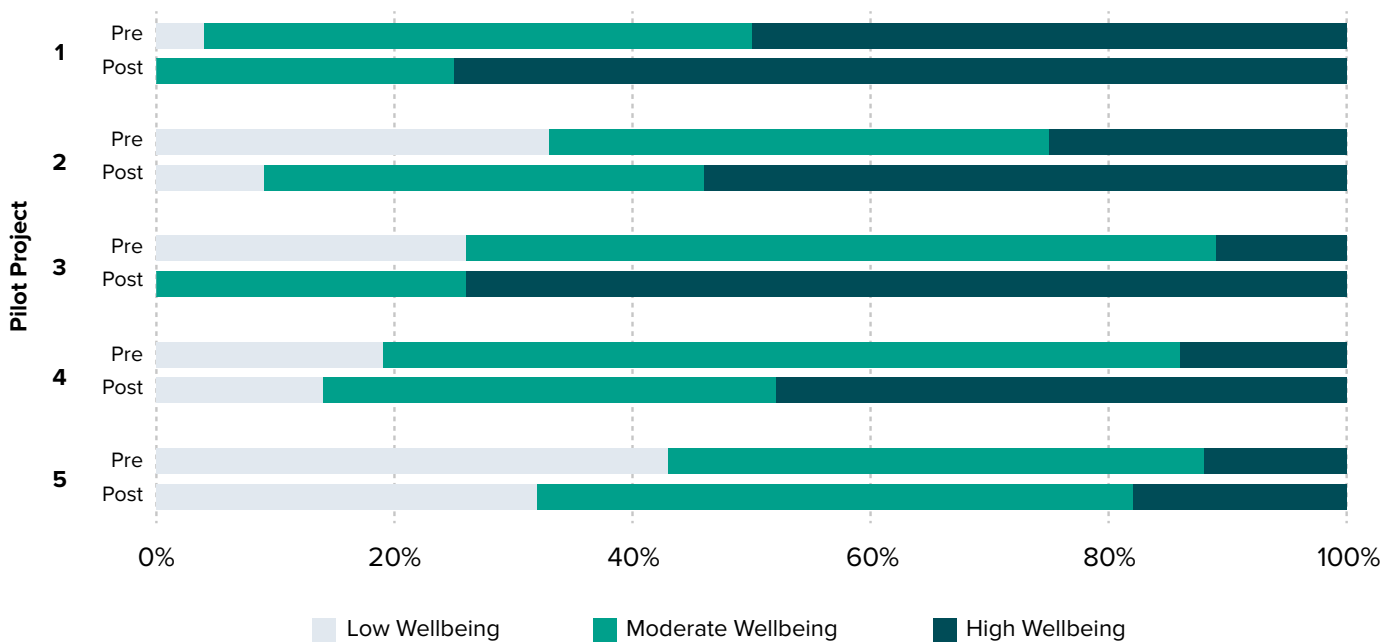
Participants undertook the survey at two different points in time i.e. at baseline (on joining the programme) and follow-up (circa 8+ weeks later) to identify any changes in wellbeing based on responses.

In total, a sample of 184 participants from five projects completed both a baseline and follow-up WEMWBS questionnaire during the pilot period – Figure 1 below shows the aggregated results per project.

Figure 1 below shows the percentage of participants within each of the five project's that were calculated to have overall wellbeing scores' in either the: 'low wellbeing', 'moderate wellbeing' or 'high wellbeing' categories on joining the programme at baseline (pre) and at a follow-up point (post).



Figure 1: Safe, Fit and Well Pilot Projects WEMWBS Scores





Analysis of the WEMWBS survey data showed that:

- **All five projects reported follow-up wellbeing scores that were an improvement on baseline scores.**
- **All of the projects reported an increased percentage of participants with 'high wellbeing' scores from baseline to follow-up.**
- **All of the projects reported reduced levels of low wellbeing at follow-up compared to baseline.**

Encouragingly, a 'meaningful positive change' in wellbeing (determined by a WEMWBS score improvement of 3+ points from baseline to follow-up) was reported by 102 of the 184 participants who completed a WEMWBS questionnaire at baseline and follow-up.

Three of the five projects indicated a statistically significant improvement in wellbeing change (Wilcoxon signed-rank test, $p < 0.001$).



¹The 14-item scores on the WEMWBS survey are aggregated to result in a total score which can range from 14-70; higher scores represent higher levels of mental wellbeing. A score of less than 42 is regarded as low wellbeing, moderate wellbeing for 42-58 and high wellbeing for a score greater than 58. WEMWBS has been included in the Health Survey for England since 2010 and the population mean score has varied from 51 to 53 (NHS, 2017).

Social Value

Using data from the WEMWBS survey it was also possible to calculate a social value, using the HACT wellbeing calculator:

<https://www.hact.org.uk/social-value-publications>

Analysis of the WEMWBS data from the five projects that submitted both baseline and follow-up data, together with their programme costs, indicates that **the programme generated a wellbeing net social impact equivalent to £425,433** across the five projects equating to an average net social impact of **£2,390 per participant**.

Importance of Peer-to-Peer Learning

The research undertaken by Brunel University acknowledged how important peer-to-peer learning and support can potentially be in enhancing the role of sport in improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people taking part in community sport. Highlighting, how when young people are supported by peers they can relate to, there are benefits in terms of improved self-esteem and confidence, positive feelings of enjoyment, a sense of belonging and de-stigmatisation of mental health.

The research acknowledged that both formal and informal peer support structures have the potential for successful delivery of community sport for mental health and wellbeing impacts, together with opportunities for peer leaders to develop their leadership and communication skills, improve their confidence and take pride in their work.

This is illustrated by the feedback from young volunteers below:

"[Now] I know more stuff about mental health [...] so it's something that you need to know if you're going to go out doing the outreach sessions [...] you know some [mental health] stuff but they go into more detail with it and it makes you understand more, so [...] it helped me". (Young Health Champion).

"[I've gained] a lot more knowledge on the mental health side of things that I can give to the girls on the project, and pass along all the stuff that I'm learning about". (Young Advisor)

"Looking at other people [...] and seeing the different moods and stuff like that, [I] now know how to support them because I was in that space before". (Young Advisor)

A vertical image on the left side of the page shows a person from the side, wearing a white t-shirt, dark pants, and roller skis. They are in a park-like setting with trees and foliage in the background. The image is partially obscured by a teal overlay.

CONCLUSIONS

The research report by Brunel University highlighted how many of those involved in the project emphasised the invaluable role that sport plays in improving young people's wellbeing:

"I think sport's important, I think it's like a stress relief [...] it has loads of benefits, it kind of takes you away from, out of like your normal environment". (Project Leader)

"We try and encourage pop-up sport as a creative support session, so that the clients can open up more and discuss what's on their minds, what the issues are, and so the support worker then has got more information to work with to help them, because that's key". (Project Leader)

"It's (sport) improved sleep patterns, it's improved mood states, it's allowed them to become less socially isolated, integrate into social environments, it stops them from negative influences, you know the list is endless, especially with the groups that we're working with, who are more inclined to have mental health issues, who are more inclined to sort of commit crime, who are disadvantaged groups. So when we look at sport for good and changing lives, this is what this programme really is all about". (Project Leader)

"I think that team-building is really important because they get their social aspect, they're able to socialise, as well as occupy their minds [...] [The] discipline, and the physical fitness aspect of it as well, and moving them off let's say cannabis, because that's another thing that we also do is try and divert them away from drug use". (Partner Organisation, Community Sports Club)

In conclusion, the Brunel research study stated that there is: **'clear potential for community sport to enhance the mental health and wellbeing of young people living in disadvantaged communities'**. Researchers acknowledged the importance of sport as potentially being **'a hook for engaging people** in physical activity for health and wellbeing' as well as a means of providing: **'...a space for young people to socially connect with others like themselves, to experience positive emotions including joy, excitement, happiness, and a sense of belonging.** It can also provide an environment where young people **can escape from aspects of their life** that they find difficult and **feel comfortable** to reflect on their difficulties'.



KEY INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS IN ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The study identified four key ingredients in the Doorstep Sport approach for success in enhancing mental health and wellbeing for young people taking part. These were:

1. Tailored provision

Tailoring community sport to the needs of young people with, or at risk of, mental health problems, so that provision is designed and delivered to meet the needs and desires of the young people taking part. Recognising the social context in which sport is being delivered, the expertise, facilities and funding available to delivery organisations and addressing the barriers of time, cost, and mental health stigma that potential participants experience.

There is potential for a diverse range of sport and organised exercise to have positive benefits for a range of mental health and wellbeing outcomes for young people - including for example: football, rugby league, boxing, boxercise, golf, foot-golf, bocchia, dodgeball, volleyball, basketball, indoor cycling, road cycling, mountain biking, road running, table tennis, mixed martial arts, circuit training, gym-based fitness classes, pilates and yoga. It is the tailored approach to meet local needs, built around the five rights of doorstep sport which is most important.

"The key ingredient for StreetGames is having fun, having a laugh, being inclusive, motivate each other, support each other, and be active".
(Young Advisor)

"They come into our service with no more than a bag of clothes on their back, and a history of being excluded. And they can take part in something that won't let them down".
(Project Leader)

2. The provision of workforce training

There are many different people from within community settings, that can play a role in designing, implementing and evaluating a Doorstep Sport approach which aims to improve the physical and mental health & wellbeing of young people - including sports coaches, sports development officers, leisure service managers, community leaders, education specialists, counsellors, young peer mentors and StreetGames advisors.

To equip this community sport workforce with the knowledge and skills to design, deliver and build evidence on community sport for mental health and wellbeing will often require workforce training. The Safe, Fit and Well programme delivered a bespoke training package consisting of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) to key personnel in each pilot project, a four-day Young Health Champions residential, and a training webinar on using the Warwick-Edinburgh Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) to evidence wellbeing improvements. In addition to these formal training sessions, StreetGames' Doorstep Sport Mental Health Specialist Adviser offered bespoke on-call and on-hand support to the pilot project leads.

"... to send five or six young people on mental health first aid training [...] StreetGames offers that opportunity, and that's brilliant". (Doorstep Sport Delivery Coach)

3. Partnerships

Networks and partnerships between community sport, education, charity and local authority sectors underpin the successful delivery of sport for mental health and wellbeing goals through knowledge exchange, learning about the complexities in designing and delivering community sport to young people with mental health and wellbeing issues, and developing robust evaluation strategies.

The partnerships allowed the projects to use expertise from a range of organisations to cope with issues that may be unfamiliar to the sports practitioners.

Similarly, the sports experts were often in a position to offer advice and support to public health and wellbeing organisations.

"We work on the national strategy with MIND on their Get Set to Go programme [and] Active Essex use us as one of their leading campaigners for mental health in the county and further afield. We also work with external clubs, where we train their staff in Mental Health First Aid". (Project Leader, Local Authority)

4. Strategies to encourage high quality, credible research, monitoring and evaluation

Expertise and experience of monitoring and evaluation varies significantly across the community sport sector, together with issues of capacity. However, there is an identified need to build evidence about the role of community sport on mental health and wellbeing in diverse communities of young people.

StreetGames has an established emphasis on programme evaluation and there is recognition of the need for rigorous monitoring and evaluation and providing support to the pilot projects to assist in this area. The inclusion of Action Learning Sets (ALS) also provided a structured forum for small group discussions about complex applied issues in delivering sport for mental health and wellbeing and were particularly valuable for professional learning. The ALS provided an opportunity for project leads to share experiences, discuss challenges and potential solutions. The ALS also provided an opportunity for personal development of project leads and setting standards of and good practice in the programme design, delivery and evaluation of sport for mental health and wellbeing.

“the support from the other projects is good as well, [we] find out what they’re doing and think ‘oh, would that work in our environment?’, and you know just putting different ideas together”.
(Project Lead)

“that aspect of us all getting together and sharing the good practice is crucial, because it allows us to talk about what’s going right, what’s going wrong, and what we can learn from each other”. (Project Lead)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research undertaken by Brunel University identified five recommendations which provide a framework for the identification of key principles or best practice guidelines for practitioners who are designing, delivering and evaluating Doorstep Sport to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people in disadvantaged areas. These emphasise:

1. Promoting community sport partnerships

Partnership work between practitioners from within the community sport, education, local authority leisure services, and the voluntary and third sectors is recommended to ensure opportunities are created for community sport to reach some of the most vulnerable young people in society in the prevention and treatment of mental health and wellbeing problems.

There should be opportunities for knowledge exchange where experts can share their vision and approach to using sport to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people and to ensure inclusive opportunities for supporting good mental health and wellbeing through community sport.

2. Implementing the principles of Doorstep Sport

The principles of Doorstep Sport are well established for ensuring young people in disadvantaged communities can engage in sport to develop an ability to take control of their lives, make appropriate lifestyle changes and improve communities. We recommend such principles are employed to provide the active ingredients in designing and delivering community sport for improving mental health and wellbeing for young people. This will include a focus on ensuring sport is delivered at the right time, right place, right price, in the right style and with the right people so that it is tailored to the needs of young people taking part.

3. Raising awareness of young people's mental health and wellbeing

The positive relationships between community sport, physical activity and improved mental health and wellbeing should be a key message in programming and promotional work connected to Doorstep Sport. A skilled and knowledgeable workforce is essential to designing, delivering, promoting and evaluating community sport for mental health and wellbeing and sport coaches and youth workers are a community-based asset in this work. Sport coaches and leaders would benefit from sector investment in training to develop skills and understanding pertinent to the delivery of community sport for mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

Local authorities, further education institutions, voluntary sector agencies and sports clubs can act as centres for the delivery of mental health and wellbeing-focused training. Several established training products are appropriate and include Mental Health First Aid Training and the RSPH Level 2 Youth Health Champion Certificate. Bespoke workshops to develop skills and confidence in recognising the mental health needs of young people, challenging mental health stigma and being able to start a conversation about mental health and wellbeing are also central to knowledge development and knowledge exchange in the youth sport and mental health and wellbeing sectors.

4. Supporting high-quality opportunities for peer-to-peer support

Peer-to-peer support and learning has been found to provide a medium for supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing. We recommend the provision of high quality opportunities for peer-to-peer learning about mental health and wellbeing to include informal and formal opportunities for reflection about personal experience and to develop knowledge and understanding of how to support other young people.

5. Improving the evidence base and opportunities for knowledge exchange

It is recommended that monitoring and evaluation and knowledge exchange is embedded into Doorstep Sport programme design and delivery at an organisational level and is both process and outcome focused. We recommend that StreetGames works to determine key priorities in developing the evidence on the contribution of Doorstep Sport in supporting and improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people living in disadvantaged communities and engages with a range of evaluation partners to incorporate collaborative approaches to monitoring, data collection and evaluation that can strengthen the evidence base.



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