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The logo for The Centre for Social Justice, featuring the text "THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE" in white, uppercase letters on a dark red background.

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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
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Iain Duncan Smith bids to rescue state school sport

Plans for a sporting revival among Britain's schools and youth clubs aimed at rescuing troubled teenagers from a life of crime and drugs are being drawn up by a leading centre-right think-tank.

Former Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan Smith has asked his team at the Centre for Social Justice to conduct a major inquiry into the role that sport can play in engaging deprived youngsters and the decline of team games in inner city schools.

The project is being supported by The Lord's Taverners, a leading sporting charity for disadvantaged and disabled young people.

This will be chaired by Michael de Giorgio, who runs Greenhouse, a pioneering charity that provides sports programmes to disadvantaged young people in schools and clubs across London. Sir Tim Rice will act as a Patron to the review.

The report is expected to be published next year (2011) in the run up to the 2012 London Olympics.

The move comes against the background of growing concern about the lack of sporting opportunities for young people in the inner cities and warnings about the rising tide of youth obesity.

Many commentators have traced this decline to the anti-competitive attitudes fostered by the liberal education establishment in the 1960s.

A Government-commissioned survey by pollsters MORI published last summer showed that a staggering one in four children are not taking part in any organised sport. This rises to nearly 60 per cent among 16-19-year-olds.

This is despite extra Government investment in school sport and a £100 million official campaign launched in 2007 to get children doing five hours of sport a week, with at least two hours during school time.

An Ofsted report last year found that one in three 14-16-year-olds are failing to reach the two-hour benchmark.

Another survey conducted by the insurance company Aviva found that teenagers are spending more than 20 times longer in front of a TV set or computer than they are playing sport on a weekly basis.

But there is growing evidence that major team sports and athletics are increasingly dominated by the public schools.

In the last three Olympics, an average of 50 per cent of medal winners were educated at public school. But only 7 per cent of the general population have attended fee-paying schools. Thirty seven per cent of those who took home medals from Beijing in 2008 had some form of private education.

The inquiry will examine how sports programmes can help young people take a positive path in life, and avoid crime and drug addiction.

And it will study how sports can help troubled teenagers acquire worthwhile habits such as self-discipline, punctuality and teamwork.

Mr Duncan Smith said: "At the CSJ we are dedicated to finding the pathways out of poverty for disadvantaged people, especially the young.

"We believe that sport can play a major role in reversing the tide of social breakdown and creating new opportunities and a new sense of achievement for deprived youngsters.

"We will study in detail the contribution currently made by schools, clubs and the voluntary sector in general.

"I personally believe that competitive games and sport in general can play a much bigger role in giving deprived and disaffected youngsters a second chance in life and teach them social, intellectual and physical skills that will help them overcome the obstacles they face at home and in their communities.

"This is not about identifying Olympic champions, but as the 2012 London Games draws nearer, it is about harnessing the inspirational qualities of sport to our national efforts to reverse social breakdown and widen opportunity."

For media inquiries, please contact Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on 07889 617003 or 0203 008 8146 or Alistair Thompson on 07970 162225 or 0203 008 8145.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Centre for Social Justice is an independent think tank established, by Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP in 2004, to seek effective solutions to the poverty that blights parts of Britain.

In July 2007 the group published Breakthrough Britain. Ending the Costs of Social Breakdown. The paper presented over 190 policy proposals aimed at ending the growing social divide in Britain.

Subsequent reports have put forward proposals for reform of the police, prisons, social housing, the asylum system and family law. Other reports have dealt with street gangs and early intervention to help families with young children.

The Lord's Taverners is one of the UK's leading youth cricket and disability sports charities and the official charity for recreational cricket whose objective is to give young people a sporting chance. This year The Lord's Taverners will donate nearly £3 million to help young people of all abilities and backgrounds participate in sporting activities by channelling funding into specific schemes:

The Lord's Taverners was founded in 1950 (2010 is our Diamond Jubilee) and has raised and distributed over £30m to schools, clubs and special needs organisations in the UK in the last decade.

You can find out more about The Lord's Taverners at www.lordstaverners.org