



SPORT WORKING GROUP

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Michael is a Co Founder of Greenhouse Schools Project. He continues to be involved full time in its development. Greenhouse aims to transform the lives of young people aged 11-16 by engaging them in sports and performing arts. Projects currently take place in over 30 schools and 7 community clubs.

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Breakthrough Britain: Harnessing the power of sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people

Too many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are not achieving their potential. The challenges they face – such as family breakdown, poor educational experiences, low aspirations and negative peer influence – reduce their life chances, often resulting in negative and destructive behaviour. As the unemployment, NEET, substance abuse and offending rates amongst young people show, such a failure to engage with our most disadvantaged young people comes with a huge human and financial cost.

- In 2009, the number of 16-24 year olds who were unemployed rose above a million for the first time.ⁱ
- The average weekly consumption of alcohol by young people has doubled over the last 20 years.ⁱⁱ
- 15% of young people reported taking drugs at some point in the last year, 8% in the last month.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In 2008-9, 77,800 young people aged 10-17 entered the criminal justice system for the first time.^{iv}
- In 2007-8, more than 8,000 pupils were excluded from English schools.^v
- Less than a third of children on free school meals attained 5 A*-C grade GCSEs in 2009 – compared to more than half of pupils not eligible for free school meals.^{vi}
- 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.^{vii}
- An Ofsted report in late 2008 found that one in three 14-16-year-olds are failing to reach the government's benchmark of two hours of school sporting activity a week.^{viii}

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) believes that all young people should be supported to achieve their potential, and that sport can act as a key tool for engaging disadvantaged young people and helping them to follow a positive path in life.

Work in the voluntary sector has focused on the impact that sport can have upon pupil behaviour in schools, with improved attendance, concentration, goal-setting and even academic performance. Sport clubs can serve as a means through which young people at risk of falling into crime, drug addiction or economic dependency can be engaged and steered into educational or vocational schemes.

The possibilities for achievement and development contained within organised, structured recreational programmes are especially valuable when applied to young people whose exclusion from education or involvement in drug use or pretty criminal activity has left them with no comparable experiences.

We also wish to look at the efforts of the voluntary sector to divert young people from crime and rehabilitate young offenders. The dynamic within sport which enables it to do these things is the presence of a responsible, caring adult – a role model. In many cases, sport provides the only stable male role model in a child's life. However, many sports clubs are hamstrung by funding issues or problems relating to their dependence on volunteers.

Key Areas for Review

Defining the areas in which sport programmes can make the biggest impact against youth offending, drug addiction, educational failure and long-term unemployment.

- Ways in which sport can enable disadvantaged people to develop attributes and skills which they can apply to other areas of life, such as discipline, punctuality, teamwork, time management, individual responsibility and improved self-esteem.
- The provision of sport to young people of all ages, especially the very young and recent school-leavers.
- This review will cover provision of sport both in schools and in sports clubs
- Evaluating the effectiveness of various approaches, particular programmes and forms of intervention.

ⁱ Daily Telegraph 30 June 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/5688214/Neets-figures-to-top-one-million-for-first-time.html>

ⁱⁱ Alcohol Concern, 'Youth Policy', http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/alcohol-concern-in-action/projects/youth-policy?searched=youth+drinking+doubles&advsearch=oneword&highlight=ajaxSearch_highlight+ajaxSearch_highlight1+ajaxSearch_highlight2+ajaxSearch_highlight3

ⁱⁱⁱ NHS, Smoking, Drinking and Drug Abuse among Young People in England in 2008, http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/sdd08fullreport/SDD_08_%2809%29_%28Revised_Oct_09%29.pdf

^{iv} DCSF, Youth Crime: Young People aged 10-17 receiving their first reprimand, warning or conviction, http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000895/Youth_Crime_StatisticalRelease_final.pdf

^v DCSF, Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals in England, 2007/8. http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000860/SFR18_2009_FINAL.pdf

^{vi} DCSF, Key Stage 4 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England, 2008/9. http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000900/SFR34_2009.pdf

^{vii} Guardian, 31 July 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/jul/31/sports-participation-children>

^{viii} Evening Standard, 3 September 2008, <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard-olympics/article-23550494-betrayed-children-are-not-getting-their-two-hours-of-sport.do>