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Release date: May 21, 2011

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.

THE CENTRE FOR
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**PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
RELEASE TIME: EMBARGOED UNTIL MORNING PAPERS OF
SATURDAY MAY 21, 2011**

Olympics offer little hope to disadvantaged youngsters, warns CSJ

Britain's poorest young people stand to gain little from the massive investment in the 2012 London Olympic Games, according to a major new report from a leading independent think-tank to be published next week.

A promise to deliver a sporting legacy across the country formed a critical part of the London 2012 bid, but this commitment is unlikely to be met, the report warns.

"The legacy promise will come in time to be viewed as a highly effective sales pitch that was never fully realised. The scale of the challenge that the Olympic organisers have set themselves is too high for the relatively limited amounts of funding and the programmes that have been promised, to deliver successfully," the report says.

The report from the Centre for Social Justice, *More than a Game: Harnessing the power of sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people*, exposes a series of flaws in the official plans to use the Games to drive up participation in sport.

The full report, which examines the extent to which UK sports policy can boost the lives of disadvantaged youngsters, will be formally launched at an event at Chelsea Football Club on Tuesday morning (May 24).

First, previous Olympics such as the Sydney Games in Australia and the Manchester Commonwealth Games, both failed to produce any significant increase.

Second, nearly half the most popular sports within UK schools, such as cricket, rounders and netball, do not even feature in the Games and will not get any boost from the 2012 event.

Third, the evidence shows that there is no link between national sporting success and increased levels of sporting activity. Even if Britain repeats its Beijing triumphs, there is no reason to suppose it will make a difference at sport's grassroots.

Fourth, specific plans designed to boost participation unveiled in November 2010 and backed by £135 million of National Lottery have major weaknesses.

Most of this money is going on boosting the supply of sporting facilities, such as the £50 million "inspired facilities" fund for upgrading local centres, and will not in themselves raise participation levels.

Efforts to boost demand have vastly more potential for realising the Singapore promise of bringing sport into the lives of Britain's young people. Moves are afoot to achieve just this with £32 million being set aside for six-week "taster" coaching courses aimed at reaching 300,000 young people and persuading 120,000 to become regular participants.

But again the evidence from previous such initiatives – most notably the Free Swimming Programme – suggests they often merely reinforce sporting inequalities rather than engage with disadvantaged groups.

"Both the inadequacies of a participation-driven approach to the Olympics legacy and the unequal nature of sports participation in this country lead us to question whether it is possible for the legacy promise in Singapore to be delivered.

"Limited available funding and the tendency to direct what there is into capital spending and short-term programming mean that it is difficult to see how the money allocated to this can be expected to produce greater benefits for disadvantaged young people.

"The participation target was intrinsically flawed from the outset, not just because it was more convincing as a sales pitch than a policy objective, but also because engaging any number of additional people in some unspecified sporting activity is not the same thing as a serious, targeted work aimed at transforming the lives of Britain's neediest people."

Copies of, *More than a Game: Harnessing the power of sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people*, are available from the CSJ website from Tuesday May 24, 2011.

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.

Its Sport Review has been supported by the Lord's Taverners, the premier sporting charity for disadvantaged and disabled young people.

In July 2007 the CSJ 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 Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP stood down as Chairman of the Centre on his appointment as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in May 2010 and is now the Founder and Patron.

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