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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 rectangular background.

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**PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL MORNING PAPERS OF TUESDAY MAY 24,
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Britain fails to exploit sport's power to fix 'broken Britain'

Britain is failing to harness the power of sport to divert young people from a life of anti-social behaviour and crime, according to a landmark new report from a major think-tank published today (May 24, 2011).

Despite spending nearly £500 million over four years on encouraging more people to play sport, ministers are failing to reach thousands of disaffected and underprivileged youths.

Participation targets in the general population have been badly missed and at classroom level results have been weakest among schools with high proportions of poor pupils or situated in run-down areas.

But an overhaul of the system – targeted on sweeping away competing interests in Whitehall, establishing clear lines of ministerial responsibility and a revolutionary new approach to sports coaching – could produce big social and athletic dividends.

The call for a fundamental rethink of Britain's confusing and overlapping arrangements for engaging deprived youngsters in games and physical education comes from the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) – the think-tank that pioneered the Government's welfare reforms and has helped to redefine the poverty debate as one as much about values and behaviour as about money.

The current piecemeal approach in which a string of Whitehall departments have responsibilities for youth sport should be scrapped and replaced by one in which the Department for Education takes the lead role, the report says.

The education department would then report to the cabinet committee on social justice, which draws together efforts across Whitehall to tackle entrenched poverty.

Big changes should also be made in the way sporting opportunities are offered to teenagers who have turned their backs on school and conventional sports clubs.

Coaches should be trained to work with troubled and deprived youngsters, access to sporting facilities should be widened, and national governing bodies for individual sports should be made accountable for how they spend taxpayer's money.

The report, *More than a game: Harnessing the power of sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people*, cites a new opinion poll to show that the public believes sport can make a huge contribution to transforming the lives of young drop-outs. The report has been supported by sporting charity, the Lord's Taverners.

On the Olympics, the report finds that Britain's poorest young people stand to gain little from the massive investment in the 2012 London Games.

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 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 warns.

But confusion about the objectives of sports policy and failures to reach out to them mean that many never experience the benefits it can bring.

On the policy front, the report concludes: "The overall structure of sport in this country does not reliably produce the social benefits it can unlock.

"Neither the way sports policy is delivered nor the way individual interventions are shaped will help us overcome the array of challenges the report sets out.

"These include lower participation rates among more vulnerable groups, a misguided focus on low-level, low-value coaching qualifications and, frequently, a failure to properly define the outcomes we expect from sport.

"We highlight the distinction between sport for its own sake and sport as a vehicle for improving the lives of disadvantaged or vulnerable young people."

"Policy makers have been confident that sport can deliver significant individual and community benefits.

"However, the delivery of sporting activity on its own is not sufficient to achieve these benefits.

"The positive outcomes hoped for by policy makers can only occur when other factors are present, which may include affirmative coaching, strong leadership, positive engagement and development of life skills and when the delivery agency

demonstrates positive values, seeking to achieve a clear mission and sustainable change.”

Referring to existing sports policy, the report identifies much muddled thinking.

“When the evidence base for sport’s effectiveness is examined, it is clear that this confusion has affected the conception and design of sports programmes and, ultimately, their ability to deliver the social benefits which their advocates claim for them.

“In short, there is a real difference between using sport as part of a programme to deliver positive social outcomes, and assuming that sport will automatically deliver these on its own.

“This difference is not always recognised in current policy formation, and our report seeks to redress this failure.”

On the importance of a new approach to training sports coaches, the report says:

“Despite the money and effort invested in improving our coaching system over the last decade, progress towards realising this wider-reaching concept of a coach’s role has been slow.

“Investing in the training of the individuals who deliver sport across the country represents the surest approach to developing sport’s social potential, while helping ensure that more young people are able to take part in sporting activity in a safe, supportive and rewarding environment.”

Gavin Poole, the executive director of the CSJ, says in a preface to the report: “By handing leadership responsibility for sport to tackle social problems to the Department for Education, we recommend radical political and governance reform.

“The experts in particular fields, such as crime reduction, the fight against childhood obesity and the use of sport in education would remain autonomous, but under this proposal ministers and officials would be equipped to use sport as a powerful route out of poverty.”

Michael de Giorgio, who chaired the panel of experts behind the report and who runs the sporting charity Greenhouse, says: “Sport can achieve some of the social outcomes that will help – even transform – our society. To achieve this there has to be a significant redistribution of funds...targeted more specifically on sports programmes for disadvantaged young people.”

Copies of the report are available on the CSJ website

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.

This report 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.