

GAME CHANGER

A plan to transform young lives through sport

September 2023



Contents

About the CSJ	2
Acknowledgements	3
Advisory Board	4
Foreword	5
Executive Summary	8
Introduction	13
Chapter One: Sport: the forgotten weapon in the fight against crime	16
Chapter Two: How sport can reduce crime through educational engagement	40
Chapter Three: How sport can reduce crime by strengthening families and relationships	59
Chapter Four: How sport can reduce crime by making neighbourhoods safer	74
Chapter Five: How sport can reduce crime through opening economic opportunities	92
Chapter Six: How sport can reduce crime by strengthening minds and mindsets	105
Conclusion	122
List of recommendations	123
Appendix	127

About the CSJ

Established in 2004, the Centre for Social Justice is an independent think-tank that studies the root causes of Britain's social problems and addresses them by recommending practical, workable policy interventions.

The CSJ's vision is to give people in the UK who are experiencing the worst multiple disadvantages and injustice every possible opportunity to reach their full potential.

The majority of the CSJ's work is organised around five "pathways to poverty", first identified in our ground-breaking 2007 report, Breakthrough Britain. These are: educational failure; family breakdown; economic dependency and worklessness; addiction to drugs and alcohol; and severe personal debt.

Since its inception, the CSJ has changed the landscape of our political discourse by putting social justice at the heart of British politics. This has led to a transformation in Government thinking and policy. For instance, in March 2013, the CSJ report It Happens Here shone a light on the horrific reality of human trafficking and modern slavery in the UK. As a direct result of this report, the Government passed the Modern Slavery Act 2015, one of the first pieces of legislation in the world to address slavery and trafficking in the 21st century.

Our research is informed by experts including prominent academics, practitioners and policy-makers. We also draw upon our CSJ Alliance, a unique group of charities, social enterprises and other grassroots organisations that have a proven track-record of reversing social breakdown across the UK.

The social challenges facing Britain remain serious. In 2023 and beyond, we will continue to advance the cause of social justice so that more people can continue to fulfil their potential.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the many organisations working to support young people at risk of crime and exploitation through sport and physical activity that generously gave up their time and shared their expertise with us during this research.

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Secondly, we would like to thank Lord Hastings CBE for facilitating a roundtable with criminal justice experienced young men whose contributions have helped to shape this report including Reece, Fifth, Matthew, Seb, Arum, Pester, Nahtel, Omar, Michael, Daniel and Stephan, as well as James Reeves of Football Beyond Borders for coordinating a workshop with current participants.

Thirdly, we would like to thank the members of the Transforming Young Lives Through Sport Advisory Board. The Advisory Board, chaired by Lord Nash, is made up of experts in youth offending and sport from a range of professional backgrounds including policing, criminal justice, civil society, frontline service delivery and Parliament.

Thanks should also be extended to, in no particular order: Stuart Felce, James Mapstone, Dr Haydn Morgan, Stephen Addison, Mark Balcar, Sangita Patel, Liam McGroarty, Gary Laybourne, Hilton Freund, Alison Oliver, Nicola Walker and Jane Newman.

Finally, we would like to extend a thank you to the sponsor of this report, the Nick Maughan Foundation, without whom this work would not have been possible.



Disclaimer: please note that the views, findings and recommendations presented in this report are those of the CSJ alone. Any errors remain the authors.

With special thanks to the **BoxWise** team including Nick Maughan (Founder), Rick Ogden (Co-founder and managing director), Scott Lovelock (Operations Manager) and Bradley Savage (Head Coach) who generously hosted us in Birmingham at the Pat Benson Boxing Academy, in Manchester at Fox Amateur Boxing Club and in Glasgow and all the young people gave up their time to speak to us.

Advisory Board

Lord Nash <i>(Chair)</i>	Former Academies and Free Schools Minister and founder of Future, a charity set up to support young people by working with other small charities and sponsoring academies
Nick Maughan	Impact investor, philanthropist and founder of Boxwise, the UK's largest boxing-focussed youth work charity
Lawrence Dallaglio	Former England Rugby Captain and founder of Dallaglio RugbyWorks, a charity working to support young people aged 12-18 who are experiencing school exclusion
Zenna Hopson	Former Ofsted Chairman and CEO of Dallaglio RugbyWorks
Keith Fraser	Chair of the Youth Justice Board and former Superintendent and Chief Inspector in the West Midlands Police
Lord Hastings CBE	Independent member the House of Lords and founder of My Brother's Keeper, a prison service and support network
Baroness Sater	Conservative member of the House of Lords and former magistrate and member of the Youth Justice Board
Reece Placid	Semi-professional sportsman, entrepreneur and prison leaver
Seyi Obakin	CEO of Centrepoin, a youth homelessness charity
Rick Ogden	Co-founder and managing director of Boxwise and Chief Fire Officer for Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service
Michael Farrant	Founder and CEO of Farrant Group, a global strategic communications firm

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Foreword

Our nation is rightly proud of its sporting history. As we prepare to cheer on the home team at the 2023 Rugby World Cup and look back on the success of the mighty Lionesses, we must ask ourselves this: can, and should, sport do more?

As this report shows, sport and physical activity has the potential to win more than just medals; we could also be celebrating higher school attendance, stronger relationships, safer neighbourhoods and healthier bodies, minds and mindsets.

Set against a backdrop of elite sporting success lies an unsung source of national pride: the charities, clubs, coaches and community and voluntary sector organisations that deliver sport and physical activity to some of the most vulnerable young people around the country. Every day they help to set our young people up for success, working on the frontlines to give young people the skills and confidence they need.

This is no easy task. A global pandemic and successive school closures have not been kind to our young people. They are more anxious, more isolated and more vulnerable than ever before. The proportion of young offenders committing violent crime has increased, and parents worry about their children's safety before and after school – that's assuming they even attend in the first instance.

By Summer 2022, 140,000 children were severely absent from school, roughly equivalent to one child in every class.¹ And almost a quarter were absent at least 10 per cent of the time.²

This cannot be allowed to continue. Not only does this severely affect those pupils' performance in exams, we also risk an additional 9,000 young offenders by 2027.³ More sport in schools is an excellent hook for encouraging pupils to attend. We also are all aware of the long-term health benefits of forming active physical habits at an early age.

While we can't re-write the past, now is the time to reimagine the future. During my five years as Academies and Free Schools Minister I saw firsthand so often the transformative power that sport and physical activity can have on our young people. At the heart of the matter lies the question of access to opportunities, which are not evenly spread. Children attending independent schools do three times as much PE as those in state schools.⁴ Unsurprisingly, people who were educated at independent schools form a hugely disproportionate percentage of many of our national and Olympic squads.

This excellent report urges revolutionising access to sport and physical activity so that no matter which school a child attends or where they live, they have access to a wide range of opportunities to play sport and be active, both on school premises and in their local communities. One in five children do no extra-curricular activity in a week, rising to one in

1 Centre for Social Justice, 2023. "[Lost and not found: How severe absence became endemic in England's schools](#)"

2 Ibid

3 Centre for Social Justice, 2023. "[School absence risks tidal wave of youth crime, CSJ analysis reveals](#)"

4 Centre for Social Justice, 2021. "[A Level Playing Field](#)"

four for children from the most deprived backgrounds.⁵

Nothing less than a fully funded Right to Sport for all pupils alongside long-term match-funded investment in youth infrastructure, services and facilities is required to deliver on this ambition. At some schools, including those in my academy group, a comprehensive package of sport is delivered.⁶ I challenge this Government, and the next, to equip more schools to do the same.



Lord Nash

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Education, 2013–17

Photo of Lord Nash by [UK Government](#)

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid



Executive Summary

"Sport helped me have hope as well . . . When I started boxing, the simple 'well done's' meant a lot. A couple of weeks ago, after a fight my coach said, 'I'm proud of you'.
"And then words stuck with me [sic]. I went home and that stayed in my mind, it made me feel like I'm worth something and I could achieve something. That's what it is for me."

Omar, aged 17, in evidence to the CSJ*

Sport has the power to transform lives. Of course, it keeps us fit. But so much more. For the young people of this nation, sport unlocks life-long friends, introduces mentors, provides purpose, builds confidence – and keeps us out of trouble.⁷ It boosts academic prospects, combats mental ill health, and gets us ready for the world of work.⁸

The evidence is resounding: sport is more than a game. Yet for too long, the power of sport has been underappreciated, particularly the role it can play in both reducing crime and protecting young people from it.⁹ In this report, we propose a new plan to put this right – and transform young lives through sport.

The forgotten power of sport

In recent years, young people have fallen to the bottom of the political agenda. Chronic underinvestment in youth services, diminishing extracurricular opportunities and dwindling activity levels have coincided with rising levels of youth violence, a spiralling mental health crisis and growing discontent.

Original polling for the CSJ reveals that, while almost half of parents say their children have been victims of antisocial behaviour, barely a third think that young people have access to enough opportunities, like sports clubs, in their local areas.

Sport increases underachieving pupils' numeracy skills by 29%

Sport interventions reduce offending by 52%

Disadvantaged children who are active are twice as likely to say: 'If I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it'

Source: DCMS, 2010; YEF, 2021; Sport England, 2019

Sport interventions have been found to reduce offending by 52 per cent, significantly cutting violent crime.¹⁰ And yet third of children today are inactive, that is, doing less than 30

7 Centre for Social Justice, 2021. "A level playing field: why we need a new school enrichment guarantee and how to deliver it"

8 Ibid

9 Youth Endowment Fund, 2023. "Do sports and positive activities help to prevent violence?"

10 Youth Endowment Fund, 2021. "Sports Programmes: Toolkit technical report"

minutes of exercise per day.¹¹ One in five primary and secondary pupils do no extracurricular activities at all in an average week, rising to one in four pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.¹² Still the UK lags behind its OECD counterparts, with activity levels lower than Finland, Ireland, Austria, Hungary, Spain and the EU average.¹³

It is perhaps no wonder that our young people are fed up, disenchanted and disempowered. They include the so-called 'ghost children' of lockdown who, absent from school and without urgent re-engagement, will graduate into a post-pandemic world for which they are grossly underprepared, three times more likely to offend by aged 17.¹⁴

And yet our research shows that far from abandoning them to this fate, now is the time to double down on our commitment to the next generation. After the damage inflicted by successive lockdowns, we owe it to our young people to offer them the brightest possible future.

We believe that sport holds the key to this. Yet in a nation famous for inventing many of the world's favourite sports, how can it be that Premier League footballers are bought and sold for tens of millions of pounds while local authorities spend an average of just £156 per young person?¹⁵ Why is it that a nation that can proudly host elite international sporting events to the tune of £9 billion allow its own, local, facilities, clubs and youth centres to fall into disrepair?¹⁶

The resulting imbalance is evident not only in the 'activity gap', where children from affluent families outperform their disadvantaged peers,¹⁷ but also academically and socially too.

We welcome the ambitions set out in the Government's recently published *Get Active Strategy*. However, we now need a clear, strategic national plan delivering on those ambitions—especially for disadvantaged children and young people. This report sets out clearly how this can be achieved across government policy areas including criminal justice, education, family, local communities, health, skills and employment.

Efforts to widen access to out of school activities through the National Youth Guarantee are a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, we have taken evidence suggesting that funds are not being used to full effect, with low levels of accountability and cash leaking into different programmes.

Meanwhile, the potential to leverage the immense private wealth, philanthropic appetite, and new innovation surrounding youth sport is left largely untapped. Charities such as OnSide are harnessing private philanthropy to significantly increase the supply of first-class youth infrastructure.¹⁸ The Nick Maughan Foundation has supported the roll out of the innovative BoxWise programme at 42 venues across the UK, including in partnership with the youth homeless charity Centrepont.

11 Sport England, 2022. "Active Lives Children and Young People Survey"

12 Centre for Social Justice, 2021. "A level playing field: why we need a new school enrichment guarantee and how to deliver it"

13 OECD, 2020. "Physical activity among children and adolescents"

14 Centre for Social Justice, 2023. "School absence risks tidal wave of youth crime, CSJ analysis reveals"

15 National Youth Agency, 2021. "Time's running out: Youth services under threat and lost opportunities for young people"

16 BBC, 2013. "London 2012: UK public says £9bn Olympics worth it"

17 Sport England, 2022. "Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Academic year 2021-22"

18 Onside, 2023. "Here for young people: Annual review 2021/22"

And brands including Nike and Adidas have led innovative schemes, matching employee donations to their impact funds and collaborating with Premier League Football Clubs to address issues including knife crime. Yet government all too often views sport policy through the levers of Whitehall alone, with social outcomes contracts, partnership and match funding opportunities repeatedly squandered.

What we call for in this report is an entirely new approach – bringing together government, schools, governing bodies, community organisations and philanthropists to widen sporting opportunities for all young people.

A plan to transform young lives through sport

The Centre for Social Justice is calling for nothing less than a Prime Minister-led Taskforce to harness the multiple and cross-cutting benefits of sport and physical activity for our nation's young people.

As we outline in the report, the gains of getting this right are diverse: from crime reduction to boosting education, improving health to preventing economic inactivity. Only a Prime Minister-led programme can transcend the boundaries of Whitehall departments – and bring together the charitable, private and philanthropic partners needed to deliver this ambitious plan.

"We're calling for a radical new approach, bringing together business, charities, schools, governing bodies, and politicians..."

At the core of our vision is a new **Right to Sport** for all young people, simplifying the spaghetti junction of youth funding streams into a single pot to deliver two hours of additional extracurricular sport every week – provided in school premises by community organisations, in addition to traditional PE time. To deliver the Right to Sport, we propose measures that would raise new funds to facilitate a £1.4 billion Young People Fund, unlocking five hours of extracurricular activity per week for all state secondary school pupils, mirroring that seen in the independent school sector.

The Prime Minister-led Taskforce would oversee the delivery of the plan, which is comprised of the key recommendations set out in summary below.

1. Revolutionise access to sport and physical activity for all children and young people

- **The Government should announce a new Right to Sport for all secondary school pupils**, underpinned by new funding to unlock five hours of extracurricular activity for every pupil in secondary school in England. The Right to Sport would see all pupils participate in a minimum of two hours of extracurricular sport per week, on top of PE time already scheduled on the curriculum, closing the 'activity gap' between state school pupils and their independently educated peers
- **The Government should establish a new £1 billion social outcomes fund to tackle complex social problems including youth offending through sport**, along with corresponding standards for data collection

- **The Government should establish a new Youth Infrastructure Endowment**, to embark on an ambitious building programme of new youth clubs and services, harnessing the power of match funding from the private and philanthropic sector to advance this national mission

2. Prioritise existing commitments to unlock the power of sport

Follow through on existing commitments

- **The Government should publish the results of its consultation into local authority statutory guidance on youth service provision** before the end of this parliament. This should provide greater clarity on the 'youth service duty' and set out in concrete terms what counts as 'sufficient' youth service provision
- **The Government should commit to implementing, in full, the recommendations from the 2018 independent review of sport in justice** including ensuring every secure environment has a physical activity strategy and encouraging more partnerships between prisons, community groups and sporting bodies
- **The Opening School Facilities funding should prioritise applications from schools in areas with the highest levels of youth violence**

Review existing coaching qualifications and scale up learnings from new or previous programmes of work

- **The Ministry of Justice should work with Oasis Restore to share emerging learnings and models of best practice with the wider youth estate** with a view to replicating successful programmes
- **The Government should launch a review into coaching qualifications to ensure they are fit for purpose**, including examining how youth work qualifications could aid sports coaches supporting at-risk children and young people and vice versa
- **The APPG for Sport and Physical Activity in the Criminal Justice System should carry out a review into how criminal justice commissioners are using sport** to create safer communities across England and Wales and make recommendations for strengthening and embedding collaborative working in future

3. Optimise statutory guidance and data collection

Review existing data collection methods

- **Sport England should ensure that it makes granular data on its spending publicly available**, paying particular attention to how it is targeted at key populations including those that are least active and those that are disadvantaged. Sport England should also directly fund national delivery organisations that work with disadvantaged young people
- **The Ministry of Justice should publish data on physical activity levels in prison**

- **The Department for Culture, Media and Sport should commit to creating a bespoke, child-friendly online directory of youth services**, including sports providers, facilities and price, building on the data collected through the National Youth Sector Census

Update statutory guidance

- **The Government should make sharing of sports facilities a minimum baseline for independent schools to meet their public benefit test**
- **The Government should update statutory guidance to ensure that all Family Hubs are connected and working in partnership with local sports organisations in their area.** This should enable referral in both directions; from sports to family hubs and vice versa.
- **The Department for Education should update statutory guidance on setting up partnerships between the independent and state education sectors** to include sharing of facilities for sports and physical activity
- **The Government should review the evidence for the role sport can play in supporting students with special educational needs** and commit to publishing updated guidance to correct this notable absence in the recent SEND Improvement Plan

4. Galvanise support for sport and physical activity in the public sphere

- **The Prime Minister should use the new Taskforce** to harness the multiple and cross-cutting benefits of sport, convening leaders in the sports world alongside grassroots sports organisations to enable ministers across government to deliver the first ever inter-departmental strategy for young people's access to sport
- **The Department for Media, Culture and Sport should launch a youth-led public awareness campaign on the benefits of sport** and physical activity

For too long, young people have languished at the bottom of the priority list. And a serious plan to improve life chances while protecting young people from crime is well overdue. We believe that, taken together, these recommendations would be game changing, reaping social and economic benefits for generations to come. All we ask now is for either Rishi Sunak or Sir Keir Starmer to grab hold of the baton and take the opportunity to transform young lives through sport.

Introduction

The three connected problems of violent crime, physical inactivity, and disjointed public policy

We have a crime problem: 2021 was the deadliest year on record for London's young people, with 30 teenagers murdered in the capital.¹⁹ While overall youth crime is on a downward trend, certain offence groups, as a proportion of overall offending, such as weapon offences and violent crime, are seeing an uptick. Set against a backdrop of dwindling activity levels, covid-related school closures, declining mental health and reduced local authority spend on youth services; our young people are struggling.

At the same time, we have a health problem: less than half of young people are meeting the Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) guidelines of taking part in an average of 60 minutes of sport and physical activity per day.²⁰ As with violent crime, this issue is especially salient for young people from disadvantaged and ethnic minority backgrounds: they are the least likely to be active. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are also less likely to report positive attitudes toward sport and physical activity.

Compounding both of these, we have a third problem: poor public policy. Government spending on youth services has declined sharply since 2010. Even where it is available, access to youth service provision is not evenly distributed across the country. Neither is access to sports facilities, parks and green spaces. Again, this issue affects the most disadvantaged most acutely. Government spend on grassroots sport is not targeted at the most disadvantaged, and cost remains a key barrier to accessing sports facilities for children and families from the most deprived backgrounds.

All of these problems need to be addressed. As we detail later in this paper, sports can and should play a crucial role in reducing levels of violent crime and anti-social behaviour. In order to do this, we need to make much better use of our resources and facilities as a nation. As we indicate later on, a great deal of progress could be made through improvements to public policy.

In the following chapter (Chapter One), we address each of these problems in turn to demonstrate more clearly their form and structure. This enables us to understand more fully how public policy reform can be used to improve outcomes through the power of sport across areas such as crime, health, education, local communities, and family relationships. In this section, we identify how a range of overarching policy issues are causing problems in practice. These include strengthening Government strategy plans, addressing gaps in public data, and chronic disconnection and disjointed decision-making between Government departments.

¹⁹ Sky News, 2022 "London teenage homicides grim rollcall of young victims killed in capital this year"

²⁰ Sport England, 2022. "Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Academic Year 2021-2022"

Sport can play a crucial role in reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour, through education, family relationships, economic opportunities, stronger communities, and better mental health outcomes

The subsequent chapters turn to examine how sport can and should play a vital role in preventing young people from engaging in crime and anti-social behaviour. We demonstrate the multiple beneficial roles sport is able to play in promoting educational engagement (Chapter Two); strengthening family relationships and bonds with responsible adults (Chapter Three); ensuring streets are safe and neighbourhoods free from anti-social behaviour (Chapter Four); opening doors to economic opportunity—both to play sport and move into employment (Chapter Five); and build motivational mindsets and resilience in the face of mental health challenges (Chapter Six).

Each of the chapters 2-6 proceeds with a common structure:

- The first section of each chapter examines the relationship between that chapter's area of policy and practice to crime (e.g. education in Chapter Two and family life in Chapter Three).
- The second section of each chapter examines 'why sport works' by demonstrating the theories and mechanisms of change, showing the power of sport to improve social outcomes in the lives of young people and their local communities.
- The third section of each section details how this can work most effectively in practice. Drawing on extensive case study evidence and policy analysis, we show how policymakers and practitioners can harness the power of sport in the most powerful ways to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Project methodology

Qualitative evidence

- 31 responses to our call for evidence
- Roundtable with 14 criminal justice and crime experienced young people aged 16 to 32 hosted jointly with Lord Hastings CBE
- Two-hour workshop with four young people hosted jointly with Football Beyond Borders
- Meetings with sector experts

Quantitative evidence

- Poll of 1,001 parents of young people aged 10 to 17 years old
- Major Multivariate Regression Analysis conducted with a nationally representative sample of 3,567 respondents aged 14+ in the UK with boosts to ensure at least 500 people with a criminal conviction or who have engaged in some form of antisocial behaviour and 500 young people aged 14 to 17 were included

We need a more concerted, integrated, and ambitious national effort to harness the power of sport

We conclude the paper with a clear call for throughgoing, cross-departmental policy reform. Our policy recommendations are made through this paper and are listed together at the end. They call for systematic change to the offer made for your young people, especially from economically limited households, in the education system, family support systems, local built environment, funding structures, youth services, and more.

For too long sport has been buried and placed on a backburner by Government. As this report clearly demonstrates, we must stop viewing sports as a 'nice to have' area of policy, but a central building block to the future of our nation. We owe it to our young people, to their families, and to their communities to recognise the power of sport. Now is the time to take meaningful, concerted, joined-up action to embed sports in our policy and culture more deeply and more profoundly than ever before. This will strengthen our social fabric, reduce our dependence on statutory services, and enable our communities to become happier, healthier, and safer places.

chapter one

Sport: the forgotten weapon in the fight against crime

Young people and violent crime

While youth crime has followed a downward trend over the last decade, certain offence groups are seeing an uptick. These include weapons offences, violence, and gang-related crime.

1.1 Weapons offences have increased among child first time offenders

According to figures from the Youth Justice Board, over the last ten years, there has been a 17 percentage point increase in the proportion of child first time entrants to the criminal justice system committing possession of weapon offences.²¹

In the year ending March 2022, there were just under 3,500 knife or offensive weapon offences committed by children resulting in a caution or sentence.²² This is 2 per cent lower than the previous year and 3 per cent lower than ten years ago.²³ The majority of knife or offensive weapon offences were for possession, and the remaining 3 per cent were for threatening.²⁴

A shockingly high proportion of young Londoners, meanwhile, know someone who has carried a knife. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime 2018 Youth Voice Survey revealed that more than a quarter (26 per cent) of Londoner's aged 11 to 16 know someone who has carried a knife, while 3 per cent have personally carried one.²⁵ These figures tally with a more recent 2022 survey of 13 to 17 year olds conducted by the Youth Endowment Fund which found that 2 per cent of young people had carried a weapon in the previous 12 months.²⁶

21 Youth Justice Board, 2023. "[Youth Justice Statistics: 2021 to 2022](#)"

22 Ibid

23 Ibid

24 Ibid

25 Mayor of London Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), 2018. "[Youth Voice Survey 2018](#)"

26 Youth Endowment Fund, 2022. "[Children, violence and vulnerability 2022: A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people's experience of violence](#)"

Statistics from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), meanwhile, tell us more about the types of weapon used by 10 to 15 year olds. Data on violence from the ONS's Crime Survey of violent incidents reported by 10 to 15 year olds reveals that, where weapons were involved, 'hitting implements' (59 per cent) were most commonly used followed by 'stabbing implements' (16 per cent), 'bottle/drinking glass' (6 per cent) and finally 'stones' (5 per cent).²⁷

1.2 Violent crime is increasing as a proportion of overall offending

Violent crime, as a proportion of overall offending, is also increasing. According to figures from the Youth Justice Board, over the last ten years, there has been a 12 percentage point increase in the proportion of child first time entrants to the criminal justice system committing violence against the person offences.²⁸ In the year ending March 2022, violence against the person offences made up one in three of all proven offences committed by children and accounted for two thirds of the youth custody estate.²⁹

Of course, experiences of violence and crime – both as victim or perpetrator – are not universal, neither across income nor ethnic background. According to the Howard League, Black children account for almost one in three children in prison despite comprising just 4 per cent of the 10 to 17 year old population.³⁰ Ethnic minority young people, and specifically Black young people, are disproportionately victims of violent crime and homicide.

In 2018/19, for every White homicide victim aged 16 to 24, there were 24 Black victims.³¹ Initiatives like Levelling the Playing Field are working to tackle this issue by increasing the number of ethnically diverse children taking part in sport and physical activity and preventing and diverting ethnically diverse children from being involved in the criminal justice system.³² Using a range of datasets we explore the extent to which violent crime affects young people in England today (see Table 1, below).

27 Office for National Statistics, 2019. Table 5 "Nature of Crime Tables, children aged 10 to 15 years violence"

28 Youth Justice Board, 2023. "Youth Justice Statistics: 2021 to 2022"

29 Ibid

30 Howard League, 2023. "Reducing racial disparities in youth justice"

31 Kumar, S. et al., 2020. "Racial Disparities in Homicide Victimisation Rates"

32 Levelling the Playing Field, 2022. "Interim Report highlights Levelling the Playing Field's success"

1.3 Estimates vary, but anywhere between 7 per cent³³, 12 per cent³⁴ and 14 per cent³⁵ of children report being a victim of violence.

Table 1: Percentage of young people reporting being a victim of violence

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN THAT REPORT BEING A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE	AGE RANGE	SAMPLE SIZE	SOURCE
7 per cent	10 to 15	3,000	ONS's Crime Survey of England and Wales ³⁶
12 per cent	11 to 16	7,832	2018 MOPAC Youth Voice Survey ³⁷
14 per cent	13 to 17	2,000	2022 Youth Endowment Fund ³⁸

To better understand how this is playing out in our streets and in our communities, the CSJ polled 1,001 parents of children aged 10 to 17 to learn more about their experiences of crime and antisocial behaviour.

We found that just under half (45 per cent) of parents said their children have ever been victims of antisocial behaviour. The most common forms of antisocial behaviour experienced were harassment and verbal assault.

Parents from low-income households – those earning less than £20,000 per annum gross – were more likely to say their children had experienced multiple forms of anti-social behaviour by other young people such as being harassed (37 per cent vs 28 per cent of all parents), being threatened verbally (39 per cent vs 27 per cent of all parents) and assaulted (21 per cent vs 13 per cent of all parents).

Three in five parents (58 per cent), meanwhile, reported experiencing anti-social behaviour in their local area, including 44 per cent who had experienced this in the last 12 months.

³³ Office for National Statistics, 2019. Table 5 "Nature of Crime Tables, children aged 10 to 15 years violence"

³⁴ MOPAC, 2018. "Youth Voice Survey 2018"

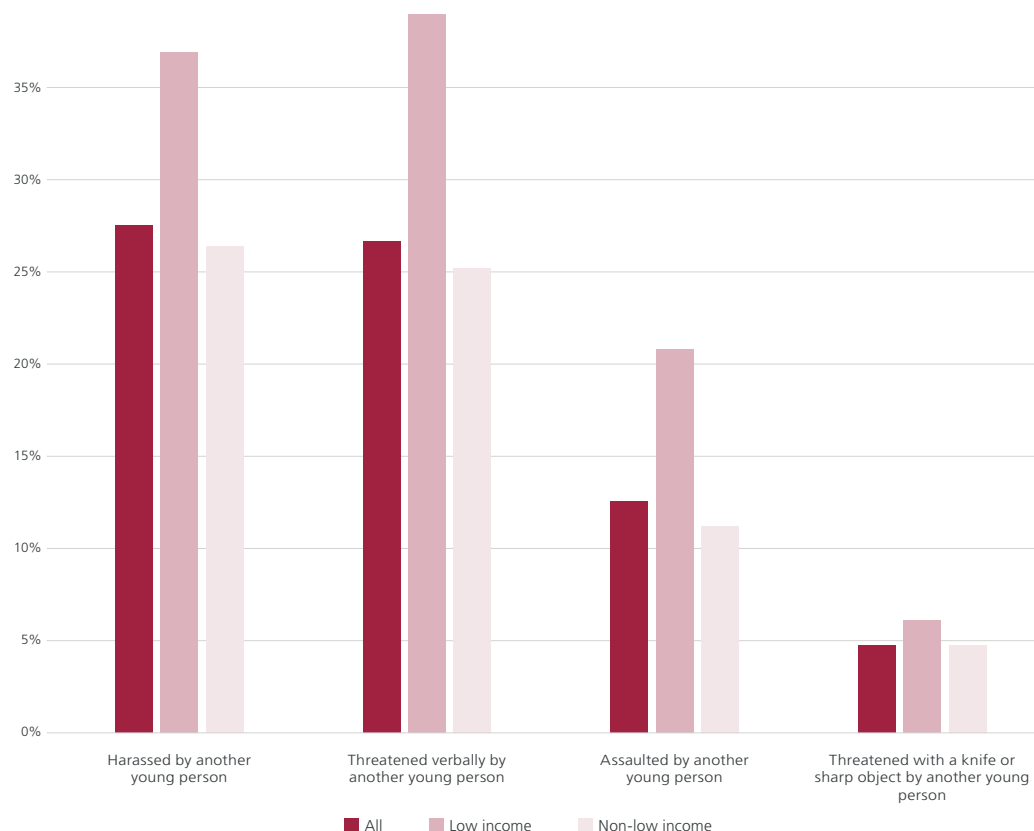
³⁵ Youth Endowment Fund, 2022. "Children, violence and vulnerability 2022: A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people's experience of violence"

³⁶ Office for National Statistics, 2019. Table 5 "Nature of Crime Tables, children aged 10 to 15 years violence"

³⁷ MOPAC, 2018. "Youth Voice Survey 2018"

³⁸ Youth Endowment Fund, 2022. "Children, violence and vulnerability 2022: A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people's experience of violence"

Figure 1: Percentage of parents who report their children have experienced antisocial behaviour



1.4 There are 450,000 young people exposed to gang-related risky behaviour

Gang affiliation, gang membership and gang grooming and exploitation is also a growing area of concern for vulnerable young people.

Research from the National Youth Agency estimates that as many as 60,000 young people aged 10 to 17 identify as a gang member or know a gang member who is a relative.³⁹ This figure rises to over 300,000 if you include young people who know someone who is in a gang and reaches 450,000 if you add young people in groups exposed to ‘risky behaviour’ associated with gangs.⁴⁰ More conservative estimates from research conducted by Youth Endowment Fund put the number of children that have been in a gang at 2 per cent.⁴¹

Previous research by the CSJ has found that the problem is particularly acute in our capital. Police estimate that there are up to 250 gangs and 4,500 members in London. While gangs are not responsible for all serious violence, they commit a disproportionate amount of crime. It is estimated that gangs are responsible for as much as half of all knife crime with injury, 60 per cent of shootings, and 29 per cent of reported child sexual exploitation.⁴²

39 National Youth Agency, 2020. “Hidden in plain sight: Gangs and exploitation, a youth work response to Covid-19”

40 Ibid

41 Youth Endowment Fund, 2022. “Children, violence and vulnerability 2022: A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people’s experience of violence”

42 Centre for Social Justice, 2018. “It can be stopped: A proven blueprint to stop violence and tackle gang and related offending in London and beyond”

"There was someone in my year. Me and him played in the school football field. He had so much charisma and interpersonal skill, everyone loved him. He also passed away a couple months ago, not far from where I live. He wasn't someone who was about that life up to year 9, and then in year 10 he started to drift towards getting involved in gangs. I don't know what happened to him after sixth form or what path he chose, but when I heard he had gone it just hit me that I'll never cross paths with him again. I definitely think that gang crime is the biggest challenge for young people."

Amir, FBB Young Person

Prior to the pandemic, data from the Department for Education's statistical release on the characteristics of children in need indicated an increase in the number of children where concerns around gangs was a relevant factor in the case.⁴³ In 2018, gangs were a factor in 8,650 cases.⁴⁴ By 2020, it was a factor in 14,700 cases.⁴⁵ While these figures appear to have dropped post-pandemic, there are concerns that this activity, far from disappearing, simply moved underground.

During the pandemic, activity moved away from the streets, becoming less visible, "changing locations from the known hotspots to use empty B&Bs, hotels and show homes, and using hire cars or taxis."⁴⁶ New demographics, in particular girls, emerged as they were more able to move around during lockdown, attracting less attention than young men. Far from throwing a spanner in the works of gangs, the pandemic "amplified vulnerabilities and exposed more young people to gang associated activities and exploitation".⁴⁷

Over one million children live in a household affected by at least one of the so-called 'toxic trio' issues of addiction, poor mental health or domestic abuse.⁴⁸ These risks will have been exacerbated by the pandemic, with the strict restrictions in place creating a pressure cooker. According to the Office for National Statistics, between April and June 2020 there was a 65 per cent increase in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, when compared to the first three months of that year.⁴⁹ Further, it is estimated that during the first three weeks of lockdown, there were at least 16 domestic abuse killings of women and children in the UK, the highest for 11 years.⁵⁰

Finally, youth workers reported a social media driven "recruitment drive" of young people with vulnerabilities heightened during lockdown, and that the "glamour" of gang culture offered some young people the "the sense of belonging, safety and security that their family homes don't fulfil."⁵¹ When young people did leave home, when domestic abuse, strained family relationships or boredom became too much, gangs were ready, actively seeking them out in unsafe locations.⁵²

43 Department for Education, 2022. "[Characteristics of Children in Need](#)"

44 Ibid

45 Ibid

46 National Youth Agency, 2020. "[Hidden in plain sight: Gangs and exploitation, a youth work response to Covid-19](#)"

47 Ibid

48 Children's Commissioner, 2022. "[Estimating the presence of the 'toxic trio': Evidence from the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey](#)"

49 House of Commons Library, 2021. "[Domestic abuse and Covid-19: A year into the pandemic](#)"

50 Ibid

51 National Youth Agency, 2020. "[Hidden in plain sight: Gangs and exploitation, a youth work response to Covid-19](#)"

52 Ibid

1.5 The vast majority of youth violence takes place in or around schools

According to data from the ONS's Crime Survey of England and Wales, violent incidents reported by 10 to 15 year olds typically take place during the week (94 per cent) and during daylight hours (89 per cent).⁵³ Three quarters of violent incidents take place in or around schools (75 per cent).⁵⁴

According to our parent polling, over half of parents (56 per cent) are concerned about anti-social behaviour in the area around their child's school or college, rising to 60 per cent of parents in low-income households and 67 per cent of those in urban areas.

53 per cent of parents whose children travel to school by public or school transport are concerned about their child's safety on their journey home from school or college. Concern was highest among parents whose children travel to school by bus (62 per cent). A survey of 2,000 children by the Youth Endowment Fund reveals this concern is shared – and felt – by the young people themselves. 1 in 4 children in London reported skipping school in the last 12 months because they felt unsafe at or on their way to or from school.⁵⁵

Polling of young people by the Youth Endowment Fund found that children feel safe in places with adult supervision.⁵⁶ 95 per cent felt safe at home, 93 per cent felt safe at a friend's house and 83 per cent felt safe in school. Feelings of safety fell in places with less adult supervision e.g. parks (43 per cent) and streets (45 per cent). Children felt even less safe near pubs and nightclubs (18 per cent). Young people had mixed feelings about youth clubs: 44 per cent felt safe and 34 per cent felt neither safe nor unsafe.⁵⁷

1.6 Experiences of teenage violence are not spread equally across the country

According to research from the Youth Endowment Foundation, nearly half (47 per cent) of teenage children in London have been a victim or witness of violent crime in the last 12 months, compared to 31 per cent in the South-East and the East of England.⁵⁸

53 Office for National Statistics, 2019. Table 1 "Nature of Crime Tables, children aged 10 to 15 years violence"

54 Office for National Statistics, 2019. Table 2 "Nature of Crime Tables, children aged 10 to 15 years violence"

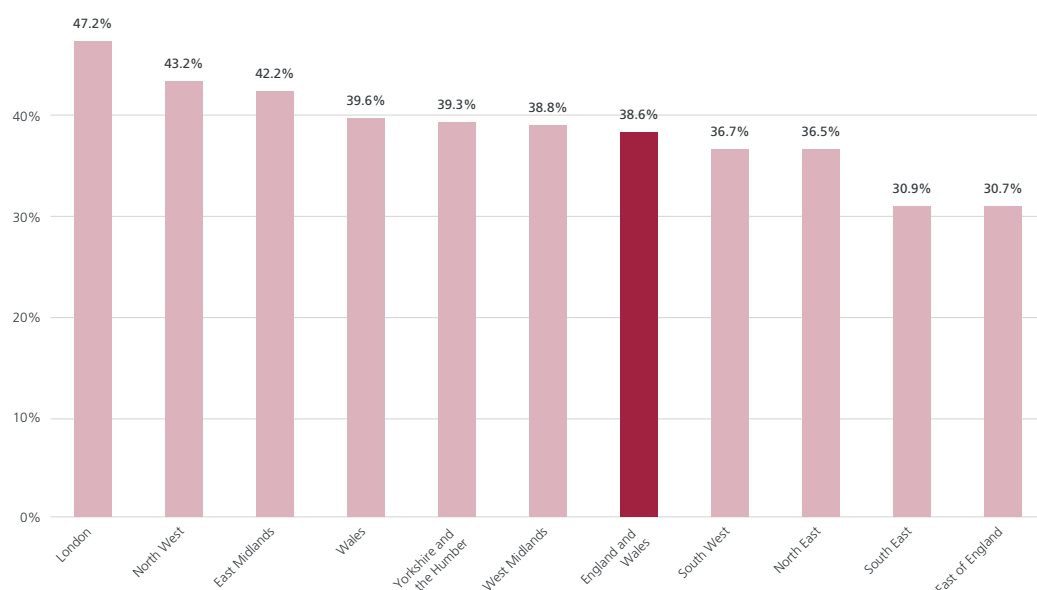
55 Youth Endowment Fund, 2022. "Children, violence and vulnerability 2022: A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people's experience of violence"

56 Ibid

57 Ibid

58 Ibid

Figure 2: Proportion of teenage children who were a victim or witness of violence in the past 12 months, by region



Source: Youth Endowment Fund

Our polling found that parents feel that their neighbourhoods are becoming less safe for children. Approximately half (51 per cent) of parents believe that their area has become less safe for their children to grow up where they live now than it was 5 years ago. Only 14 per cent think it has got safer, while three in ten (30 per cent) think it has not changed.

Children's physical activity levels

1.7 Trends show severe deficiencies in children and young people meeting recommended physical activity levels

Data from Sport England's Active Lives survey reveals that children's activity levels have recovered to pre-pandemic levels. While this is good news, the same data also reveals that less than half of children and young people (47.2 per cent) are meeting the Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) guidelines of taking part in an average of 60 minutes of sport and physical activity per day.⁵⁹

A third of children, meanwhile, remain 'less active' meaning they are active for less than 30 minutes per day.⁶⁰ This is equivalent to roughly 2.2 million children. And the problem is most acute among children from low-income families and attending schools in the most deprived parts of the country.⁶¹

59 Sport England, 2022. "Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Academic year 2021-22"

60 Ibid

61 Ibid

Children from the least affluent families are the least likely to be active with just 42.5 per cent meeting CMO guidelines compared to over half of children (52 per cent) from the most affluent families.⁶² They are also less likely to report positive attitudes toward sport and physical activity.⁶³

Activity levels are also lowest for those going to school in the most deprived parts of the country. Those parts of the country have not seen a return to pre-pandemic levels and are down by 2.8 per cent. As a consequence, the gap in activity levels between those in schools in the least and most deprived places has widened.⁶⁴

Team sports are the most popular activity for children in Years 7-11 (60 per cent), followed by active travel⁶⁵ (53 per cent) and active play and informal activity (50 per cent).⁶⁶

62 Ibid

63 Ibid

64 Ibid

65 Defined as walking, cycling, and scootering as means of transport.

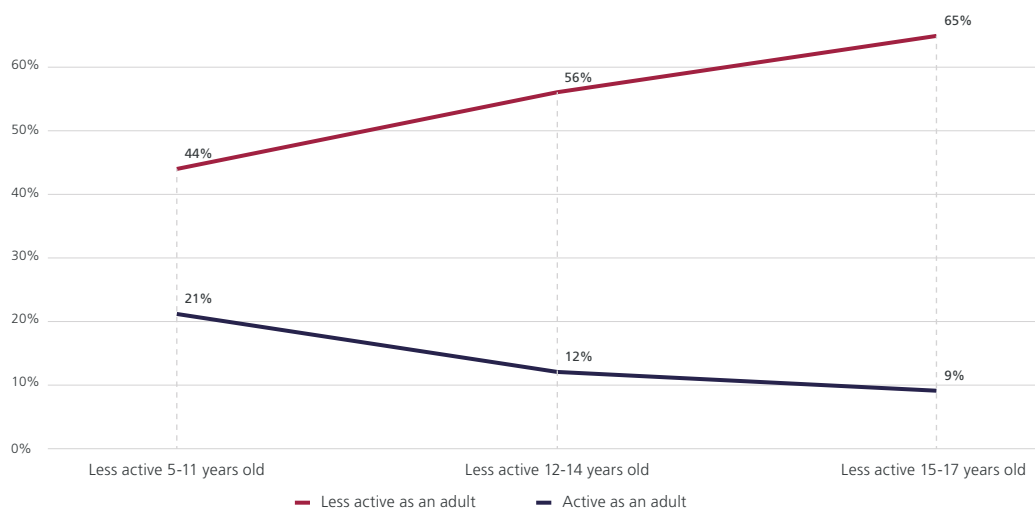
66 Sport England, 2022. ["Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Academic year 2021-22"](#)



1.8 It is important to cultivate a love of sport early in life

Statistical analysis commissioned for this report demonstrate the enormous importance of cultivating a love of sport at an early age. There is a strong correlation between activity levels throughout childhood and activity levels as an adult. Good habits produce gains over time, while the inverse is also true.

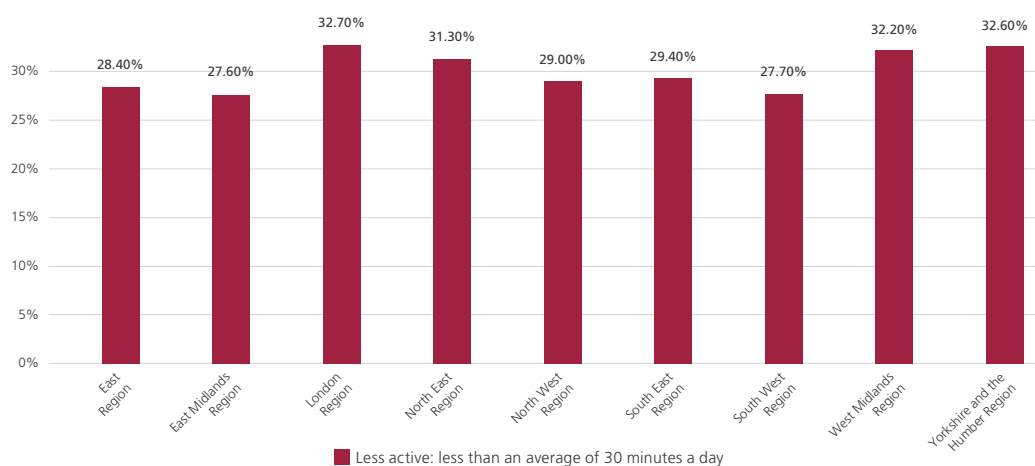
Figure 3: Childhood and adult activity levels



1.9 Like youth violence, London has the highest proportion of inactive children

London has the highest proportion of inactive children, followed by Yorkshire and the Humber and the West Midlands.

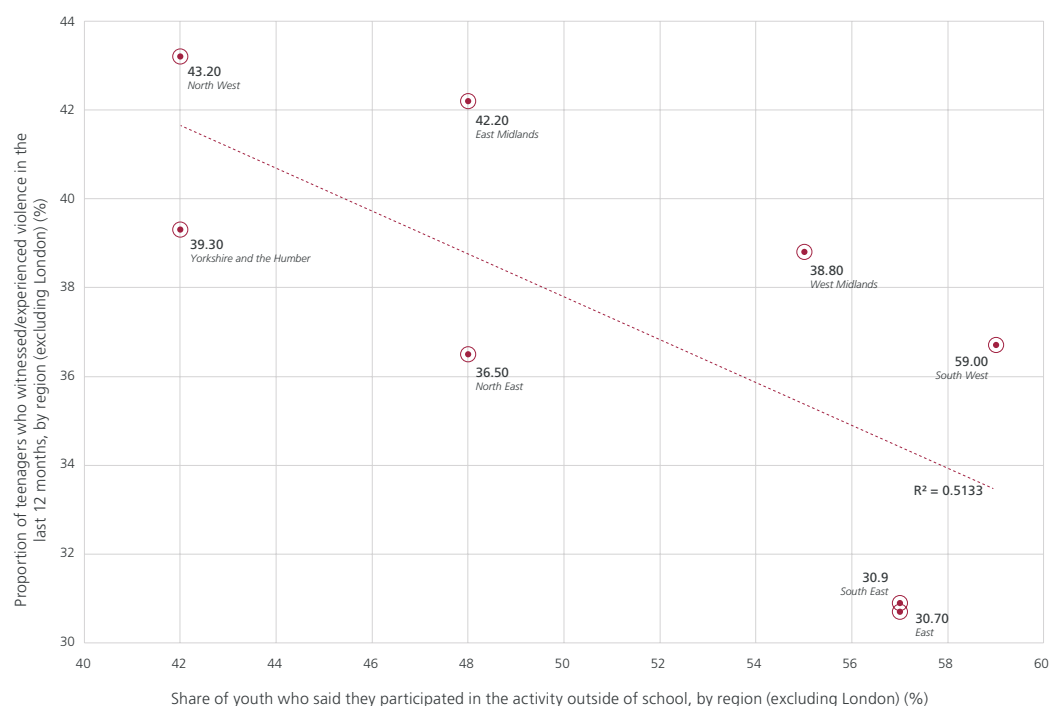
Figure 4: Young people activity levels by region



Source: Active Lives Children and Young People Survey

Using regional data from the Youth Endowment Fund's *Children, violence and vulnerability* report⁶⁷ on the proportion of youth experiencing violence and data from the Understanding Society survey on youth who participate in sport outside school⁶⁸, we can see that there is a strong negative correlation between youth crime and activity levels. Put another way, children in regions that report higher activity levels experience lower levels of violence.

Figure 5: The relationship between witnessing or experiencing violence and youth activity levels



Current policy and practice

1.10 Public policy is only just beginning to harness the power of sport for social good

Historically, sports policy has been concerned with increasing participation rates. It is only more recently that attention has been paid to harnessing the power of sport for social good. An important turning point came with the publication of the 2015 national sports strategy, *Sporting Future*, which moved beyond measuring impact by participation numbers and the number of medals won, and instead focused on the broader outcomes that sport can deliver (sometimes referred to as 'sport for development').⁶⁹

67 Youth Endowment Fund, 2022. "Children, violence and vulnerability 2022: A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people's experience of violence"

68 Table 1: Share of youth who said they participated in the activity outside of school, by region Source: Wave J, Understanding Society, 2018-19.

69 HM Government, 2015. "Sporting Future: A new strategy for an active nation"

Sport is already central to life in this country. It enhances individuals and communities, boosts the economy, and supports a range of other policy priorities, including health, tackling crime and education. Yet in order to fulfil its potential, sport and physical activity needs to be about much more than mere numbers. All of us need to fully comprehend how much of a positive difference it can make to people's lives. In this strategy we set out a framework that will allow those who fund and deliver sport to focus on the social good it can deliver. Where that focus exists it should be rewarded. Where it is absent it should be enabled.

Sporting Future (2015)⁷⁰

The strategy identified physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development as areas where sport could have the biggest impact, but acknowledged that the evidence for causality was strong and well understood for the first two areas and weaker for the others.⁷¹

That enthusiasm, and support, for the potential of sport to move the dial on social policy issues has continued. In its ten-year strategy published in 2021, Sport England (the entity responsible for grassroots sport in England) resolved to harness the power of sport to overcome five big issues post-pandemic including to recover and reinvent after Covid, connect communities, create positive experiences for children and young people, connect with health and wellbeing and create and maintain active environments.⁷²

In late summer 2023, DCMS published the long-awaited update to its 2015 strategy entitled *Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity*.⁷³ The Government's strategy follows previous initiatives with its headline focus on increasing participation rates for people of all ages and backgrounds. The strategy also makes mention of several wider policy areas in which sport and physical activity can play a positive role, for example in reducing unemployment, disadvantage, academic disengagement, criminal offending and anti-social behaviour.

However, we are struck by the absence of clear policy commitments and plans to leverage the power of sport to make a major impact in these areas. It is imperative that a strongly cross-departmental approach is delivered with concrete commitments to action. This policy report aims to set out a series of measures through which this could be delivered, and which are discussed below.

One key way in which the Government proposes to harness the power of sport for wider policy outcomes is through a new National Physical Activity Taskforce. This is a welcome step. However, we believe Government should go further.

To ensure the Taskforce delivers with focus, it should be led by the Prime Minister with young people at the forefront. As we shall demonstrate throughout this report, equalising access to sport and physical activity can be transformational in the fight against school absence, crime, family breakdown and poor mental health. Now is the time to prioritise and operationalise this most under-utilised tool in the Government's arsenal to tackle these cross-departmental social justice issues through sport.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Sport England, 2021. ["Uniting the movement: A summary"](#)

⁷³ DCMS, 2023. ["Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity"](#)

Recommendation 1

The newly announced National Physical Activity Taskforce should be bigger and bolder.

We recommend four key changes:

- **Prime Minister led** – nothing less will do. The vision must come from the top.
- **Prioritise children and young people** – beginning with devising the first ever inter-departmental strategy for young people's access to sport.
- **Focus on sport for social good** – clearly articulating how Government departments can work together to harness the power of sport to achieve social policy objectives including preventing offending and increasing school attendance.
- **Partner with grassroots clubs and charities** – the taskforce must include representation from locally trusted, grassroots organisations and charities that support at-risk groups.

1.11 Government sport programmes are disjointed, short-term and not targeted at the most disadvantaged

A recent Public Accounts Committee report found that Sport England's data on spending is "not sufficiently granular to assess how well it targets spending at the least active".⁷⁴ Of the £1.5bn it distributed in grants between 2016/17 and 2021/22, it only knows which local authorities the funding went to in respect of £450m of this spend.⁷⁵ And, according to their estimates, the share of the £450m received by the most deprived local authorities has fallen since 2016/17.⁷⁶ It also found that funding is disproportionately concentrated in areas hosting major sporting events, "rather than according to local need".⁷⁷

Recommendation 2

Sport England should ensure that it makes granular data on its spending publicly available, paying particular attention to how it is targeted at key populations including those that are least active and those that are disadvantaged. Further, alongside system partners, Sport England should also directly fund national delivery organisations that work with disadvantaged young people.

Analysis by the National Audit Office (NAO) of grants issued at a local level, meanwhile, found that while spending is 23 per cent higher per head of the population in the most deprived local authorities than in the least deprived, "the share received by the most deprived quintile of local authorities fell from 40 per cent in the five years before the 2016 strategy to 34 per cent in the five years afterwards".⁷⁸

74 House of Common Committee of Public Accounts, 2022. "[Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity](#)"

75 Ibid

76 Ibid

77 Ibid

78 National Audit Office, 2022. "[Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity](#)"

National Governing bodies, or NGBs⁷⁹, have traditionally received the lion's share of Government funding, though there are signs that the balance of power is gradually beginning to shift. Between 2017 and 2021, Sport England reduced its funding to NGBs by 33 per cent, while the number of funded partners increased from 107 to 134.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, half of the top 20 organisations awarded funding were NGBs, of which the Football Foundation accounted for 20 per cent.⁸¹ In other words, funding is concentrated in the hands of the bigger, rather than smaller, players. This, again, reflects a more general – and longstanding – concern that funding doesn't reach those operating at a more local level.⁸²

Or, in the words of the NAO report, “there was a high degree of concentration in the money awarded... The top two organisations themselves distribute Sport England funding to a range of recipients but Sport England does not hold complete data on these onward awards”.⁸³ Without knowing where the funding actually goes, we cannot be sure that it is reaching the organisations and communities that need it most.

Despite this, there are green shoots of hope. Many NGBs have their own charitable foundations that work to tackle local problems. Some clubs, like Arsenal FC, for example, have gone one step further and harnessed the power of the club's brand to partner with athletic apparel and footwear giant Adidas. And, in Scotland, just one club's outreach work, Aberdeen FC, supports 10 per cent of the population.⁸⁴

Case study: Arsenal and Adidas 'No More Red' campaign

The No More Red initiative launched in January 2022 with Adidas supporting Arsenal FC's long-standing work in the community to keep young people safe from knife crime and youth violence.⁸⁵ The campaign is designed help tackle youth violence by providing security and opportunity for the city's youth, investing in safe places to play football and developing other initiatives that offer both career pathways for young people and paid work on creative projects in the community.⁸⁶

As part of the campaign, the club replaced its iconic red home shirt with an entirely white kit in the Emirates FA Cup tie against Nottingham Forest. The kit will never be commercially available and has since been awarded to individuals who are making a positive difference in the community.⁸⁷ This year, members of the public are being invited to volunteer with one of Arsenal's ten charity partners.⁸⁸ Each volunteer can receive their own No More Red shirt and will be invited to watch Arsenal play at the Emirates Stadium.⁸⁹

79 National governing bodies are typically independent, self-appointed organisations that govern their sports through the common consent of their sport and are funded, in part, by Sport England.

80 National Audit Office, 2022. “Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity”

81 Ibid

82 The Football Foundation was the organisation awarded the most funding in this period, which included predetermined levels of funding from the Department, awarded via Sport England, for it to distribute in support of the National Football Facilities Strategy.

83 National Audit Office, 2022. “Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity”

84 Aberdeen FC Community Trust, 2019. “AFCCT 2018-19 IMPACT REPORT”

85 Arsenal, 2022. “No More Red Campaign”

86 GQ Magazine, 2023. “‘No More Red’, Arsenal's campaign for a safer London, wants you to join the team”

87 Arsenal, 2022. “No More Red Campaign”

88 Arsenal in the Community, The Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation, Steel Warriors, Don't Stab Your Future, Box Up Crime, Copenhagen Youth Project, St Giles Trust, Abianda, Octopus Community Network, The Ben Kinsella Trust

89 Arsenal, 2022. “No More Red Campaign”

Case study: Aberdeen FC

Aberdeen FC engages with over 20,200 people across the Northeast of Scotland through its projects centred around football for life, education and healthy communities. The club's outreach work covers roughly 10 per cent of the Scottish population and a quarter of the country's landmass.

The work of Aberdeen FC is supported by its Community Trust (AFCCT) which helps to deliver large scale football opportunities for young people including coaching, holiday camps, leagues and festivals. Inclusion is a key part of these projects: working across 13 partner schools, AFCCT organises activities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and is also committed to expanding girls' football in the region. Their programmes take a holistic approach. For example, school football tournaments are used as an opportunity to increase awareness of topics including nutrition, equality, anti-bullying, and mental health, while also encouraging positive community actions such as volunteering.⁹⁰

Aberdeen FC works closely with the Scottish Football Association and the two share goals and resources. Their joined-up vision of Scottish football extends to local authorities and grassroots clubs in the area. Past projects have also received international funding from the European Football for Development Network and have been recognised by the Union of European Football Associations for their work with grassroots communities.⁹¹

In neighbouring Europe, the Danish Football Association, the DBU, plays a leading role in supporting the grassroots. In 2010, while preparing for the FIFA world cup, 26 players from the national team returned to their childhood schools and clubs, as part of a nationwide 'Back to Grassroots' event.⁹²

And, across the Atlantic, Major League Baseball (MLB) supports the Boys and Girl Club of America (BGCA), an organisation that empowers young people to fulfil their potential by providing safe spaces in local areas, life-enhancing programmes and mentors.⁹³ In 2021, MLB announced a five year renewal, with \$5 million committed to the Boy and Girls Club to support grant funding toward growing participation of youth baseball & softball, workforce development & career readiness programs, a national public service announcement campaign and BGCA activations throughout the season.⁹⁴

On the international stage, the Nike Community Impact Fund, adopts a neighbourhood focused approach to supporting local community organisations around the world to drive positive, lasting change and make play possible for all kids.⁹⁵ Established in 2010, it is funded by Nike employees, who can contribute to the fund through payroll deductions or one-time donations. Nike also matches employee donations dollar-for-dollar. Since 2009, the fund has

90 Aberdeen FC, 2022. "Aberdeen FC Community Trust: 2021-22 Impact Report"

91 UEFA, 2019. "Community spirit wins Aberdeen FC a UEFA Grassroots Award"

92 UEFA, 2010. "Danes go back to school in a good cause"

93 Boys & Girls Club of America. "About us"

94 Boys & Girls Club of America, 2021. "MLB Commits \$5 Million to Boys & Girls Clubs of America to Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Charitable Partnership"

95 Nike, 2003. "Championing Our Nike Community Impact Fund"

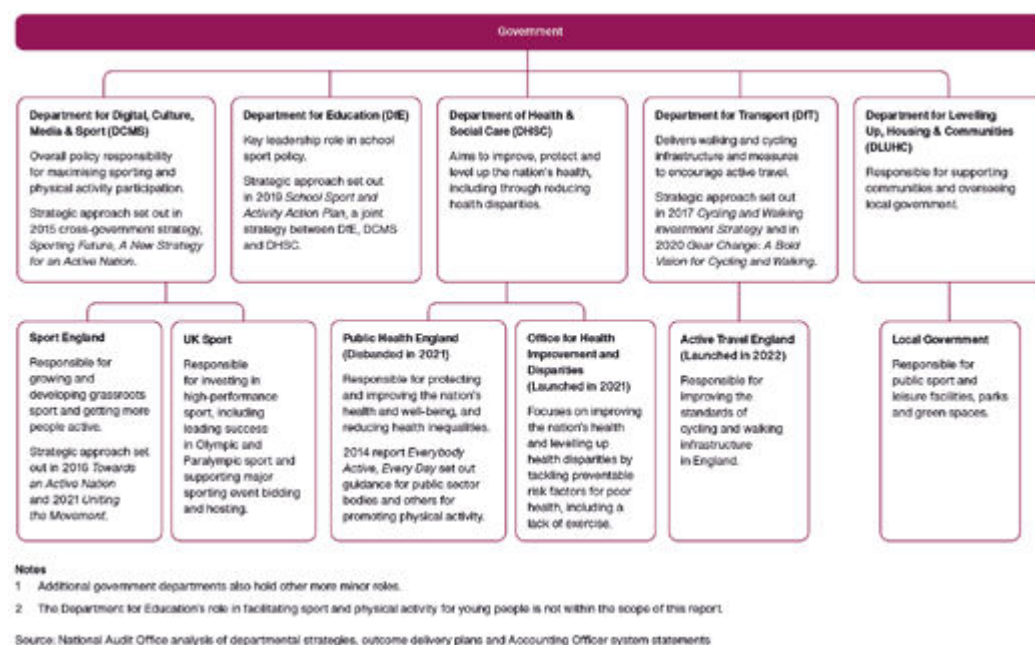
awarded \$11 million through 1,200-plus grants to grassroots nonprofits that help create active communities and get kids moving.⁹⁶ At the time of writing, the fund was open to applications from 15 cities across the world.

1.12 Grassroots sport is not well defined

Alongside the challenges of tracing where funds are spent, and indeed whether they reach the grassroots, is a further one: namely the fact that sport for development work can “defy easy placement within a specific government department which can make it difficult for sport for development projects to find funding.”⁹⁷ Evidence shared in the House of Lords’ 2022 National Plan for Sport, Health and Wellbeing went even further stating that many organisation working with communities are “below the grassroots” and that “funding never reaches them.”⁹⁸

The term “grassroots sport” itself is loosely defined and not always well understood. There is no official definition, and the term is often used interchangeably with ‘community sport’ which tends to be delivered by organisations including the third sector although many leagues, NGBs and clubs also offer this provision.⁹⁹ For as long as it operates within a “wide and complex delivery environment”, the sector will likely continue to struggle to secure the attention it deserves.¹⁰⁰ The diagram below illustrates some of this complexity around departmental responsibility for sport. The Ministry of Justice is notably absent from this chart.

Figure 6: Governmental responsibility related to sport and physical activity



Source: National Audit Office

96 Nike, 2023. “LinkedIn Page”

97 House of Lords, 2021. “National Plan for Sport and Recreation Committee”

98 Ibid

99 Sports Think Tank, 2022. “Written evidence submitted by the Sports Think Tank”

100 National Audit Office, 2022. “Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity”



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FOR A DETAILED
GRAPHIC

"The turbulent world of politics and the various visions and strategies for sport make it almost impossible to create any sustainable direction of travel at a local level. The result of this is a fractured and disjointed sports system administered by multiple organisations who are all funded differently. So many acronyms and levels of bureaucracy that collaboration to achieve a coordinated approach and a common goal is extremely difficult... With the merry go round of politics it becomes a matter of survival of the fittest at a local level. Or survival for those that know how to play the game and can reinvent themselves and the language they use."

New College Leicester

It should come as no surprise, then, that the policy response has been equally fragmented. Over the last few years, the Government has tried both to increase the availability of sport, physical activity and extracurricular opportunities for children and young people as well as use sport as a tool for social transformation (including for preventing offending) but without any real coherence or longevity. Figure (a) in the Appendix offers a snapshot of the most recent initiatives in this space.

"A significant contributing factor to the success of diverting young people away from criminal behaviour by using sport is longevity of provision, and this requires consistent long-term funding which is increasingly difficult for organisations to obtain."

English Football League

1.13 Local authorities' 'youth service duty' needs to be more clearly defined through statutory guidance

Local government is an important part of the sport provision landscape for young people. They have a statutory duty to "secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people".¹⁰¹ This is often referred to as the "youth service duty".¹⁰² What constitutes 'sufficient' youth service provision is left to councils to decide, and there is no standard for the level or type of youth services local areas are expected to provide.¹⁰³

"... Budget restrictions mean that a lot of youth services have been impacted and young people cannot access them, and for young people with social, emotional and mental health needs, this means that some of the most vulnerable of them do not have adequate access to support and guidance in terms of life after school."

Dallaglio RugbyWorks

Whilst most children have access to educational, recreational and leisure time activities through family, friends, and local organisations, the 'rationale and scope' section of the statutory guidance in this area makes it clear that this is not enjoyed universally—least of all by the most disadvantaged and vulnerable:¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Local Government Association, 2019. "Must know for youth services"

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ National Youth Agency, 2020. "Guidance for local authorities on providing youth services"

¹⁰⁴ Department for Education, 2012. "Statutory guidance for local authorities on services and activities to improve young people's wellbeing"

With the right supportive relationships, strong ambitions and good opportunities all young people can realise their potential and be positive and active members of society. Most get these from and through their families and friends, their school or college and their wider community enabling them to do well and to prepare for adult life. All young people benefit from additional opportunities and support, but some young people and their families, particularly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, need specific additional and early help to address their challenges and realise their potential.

**Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services
and Activities to Improve Young People's Well-being (2012)**

In 2019 the Government ran a consultation on how the statutory guidance for Local Authorities on providing youth services can be more useful for local youth service provision and young people themselves.¹⁰⁵ The results are still being analysed, and are unpublished, almost four years later. Given the important role that youth services play in supporting the development of children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, we recommend that the Government publish the results of the consultation, in full, before the end of this parliament.

Recommendation 3

The Government should publish the results of its consultation into local authority statutory guidance on youth service provision before the end of this parliament. This should be undertaken with a view to providing greater clarity on the 'youth service duty' and setting out, in concrete terms, what counts as 'sufficient' youth service provision with examples.

1.14 Government spend on youth services has declined sharply since 2010

A combination of funding cuts from central government and increased demand for child protection services has meant that, in recent years, "councils have had to divert increasingly scarce resources away from early help like youth services, and into services for children at immediate risk of harm".¹⁰⁶ We lay the financial cost of this bare in the paragraphs below.

There has been a 70 per cent real-term decline in local authority spend on youth services between 2010 and 2018/19.¹⁰⁷ Every region in England has seen its budget for youth services cut by more than 60 per cent, with the North-West, North-East and West-Midlands experiencing the largest losses of as much as 74 per cent, 76 per cent and 80 per cent respectively.¹⁰⁸ Net spend per young person has shrunk from an average of £136 to around £54 since 2011.¹⁰⁹ These cuts have translated into the demise of more than 4,500 youth work jobs and the closing down of 760 youth centres over the same period.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ DCMS, 2019. "Statutory guidance review for local youth services: have your say"

¹⁰⁶ Local Government Association, 2019. "Must know for youth services"

¹⁰⁷ YMCA, 2020. "Almost a billion-pound decline in funding for youth services by local authorities across England and Wales"

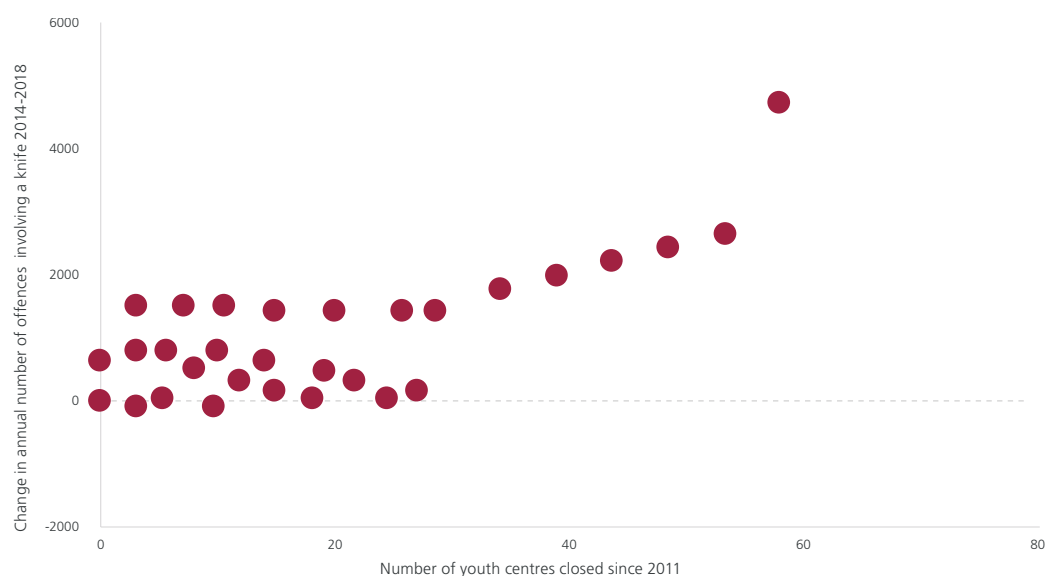
¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ National Youth Agency, 2021. "Time's running out: Youth services under threat and lost opportunities for young people"

¹¹⁰ YMCA, 2020. "Almost a billion-pound decline in funding for youth services by local authorities across England and Wales"

Research from the APPG for Knife Crime and Violence Reduction in 2020 found that there is a strongly negative association between youth centre closures and increasing knife crime. Their statistical modelling yielded a correlation coefficient of -0.7, meaning every decline in the number of youth centres is associated with an increase in knife crime.¹¹¹

Figure 7: Number of youth centres closed and changes in annual knife crime offences



Source: APPG on Knife Crime & Violence Reduction

Building on the APPG's analysis and data, charity UK Youth found that there is an increase in approximately 50 knife crime incidents for every youth centre that is shut down.¹¹² They estimate that the indirect value of youthwork is £2.2bn, of which £0.5bn relates to decreased crime.¹¹³ Youth work, in this case, is defined as a "distinct education process adapted across a variety of settings to support a young person's personal, social and educational development."¹¹⁴ It can involve a wide range of activities including open access youth clubs, outdoor learning and creative activities.

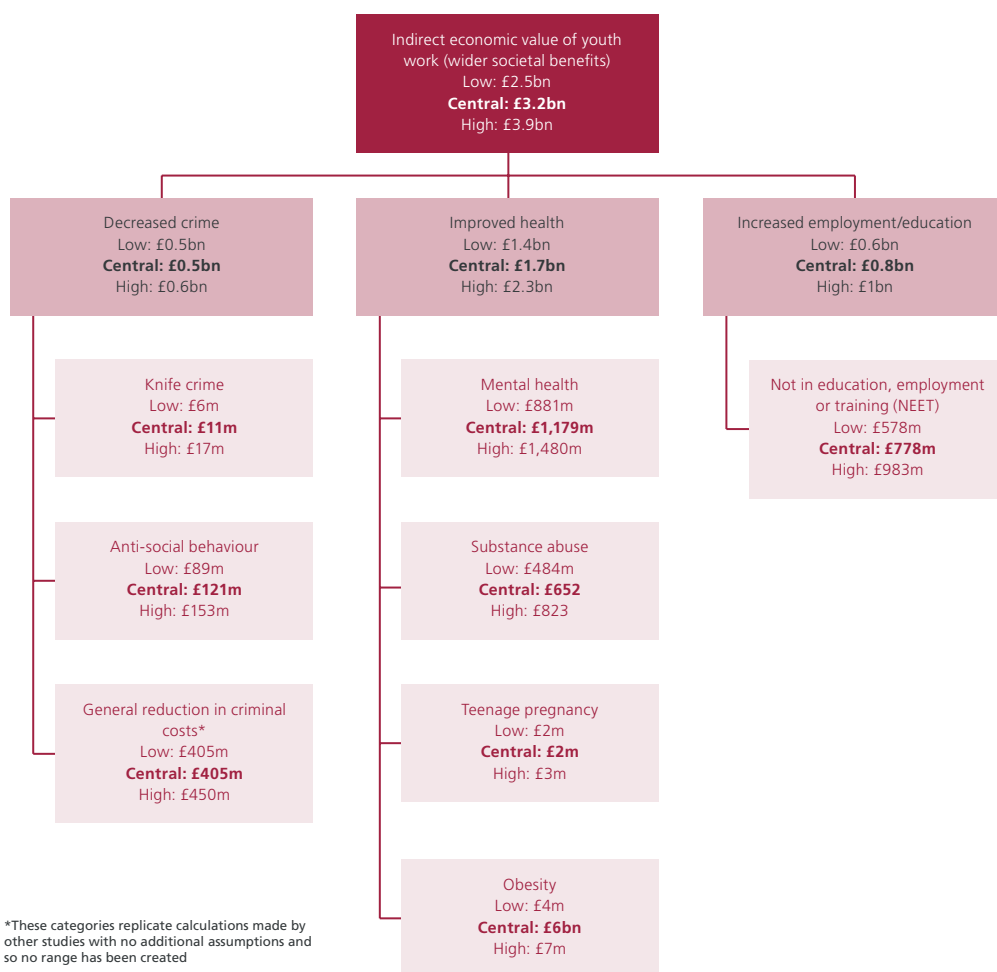
¹¹¹ APPG on Knife Crime & Violence Reduction, 2020. "Securing a brighter future: The role of youth services in tackling knife crime"

¹¹² Frontier Economics and UK Youth, 2022. "The economic value of youth work"

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Ibid

Figure 8: Indirect economic value of the youth work sector in England



Source: Frontier Economics and UK Youth

1.15 Even where it is available, there is less access to youth service provision in less affluent areas

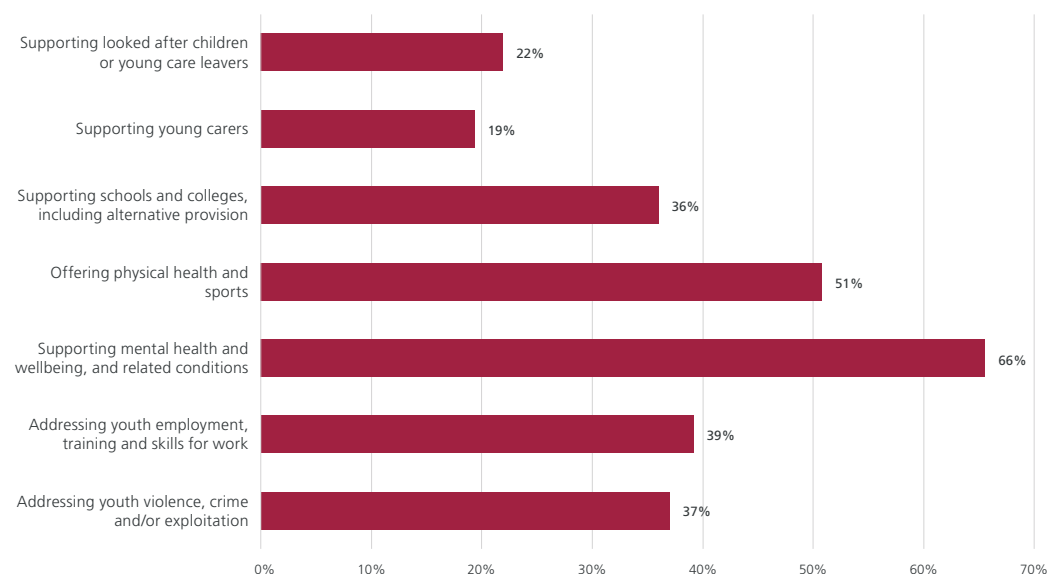
According to data from the National Youth Agency's National Youth Sector Census, youth services comprise four key areas: national uniformed organisations, local authority services, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations; and provision which is delivered through faith groups.¹¹⁵

The first of its kind, their research intended to address the information asymmetries in youth service provision data. At present, we have increasing amounts of granular detail on voluntary and community sector youth provision, but no way of extrapolating it to the whole population. On the other hand, we have nation-wide data on statutory provision, but without granular detail.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ National Youth Agency, 2021. "Initial summary of findings from the National Youth Sector Census"

¹¹⁶ Ibid

Figure 9: Types of targeted provision offered by organisations



Source: National Youth Agency

Their research found that there is a “large disparity in the amount and type of provision available to young people depending on where they live”.¹¹⁷ Affluent areas had twice as much provision as the most deprived areas, with twice as many purpose-built buildings for young people.¹¹⁸ National uniformed organisations made up 90 per cent of all provision identified, with local authority youth services, VCS organisations and provision delivered through faith groups making up the rest.¹¹⁹

VCS organisations, which accounted for less than 10 per cent of identifiable provision, were nearly twice as likely to operate in the most deprived areas.¹²⁰ 37 per cent of surveyed VCS organisations reported addressing violence, crime or exploitation and over half offered sport.¹²¹ Organisations in areas of high deprivation are not only more likely to offer each type of provision, but are also more likely to offer a wider range of provision at least once a week compared to those in the most affluent areas.¹²² This is likely owing to the wide range of needs prevalent in areas of high deprivation.

1.16 The provision of sports facilities, and access to parks and green spaces, is not evenly distributed across the country

The House of Lords’ 2022 National Plan for sport defines ‘facilities’ as “the physical infrastructure for sport and recreation and include[s], for example, leisure centres, gyms, pitches, sports clubs, stadia and facilities located in schools.”¹²³ Spaces include local parks, national parks and trails and other outdoor green and blue spaces as well as public access

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ House of Lords, 2021. “National Plan for Sport and Recreation Committee”

to farmland and private land.”¹²⁴ It notes that local authorities are the biggest public sector investor in sport and recreation and that schools are the largest owners and operators of sports facilities.¹²⁵ According to the British Mountaineering Council, less than half of the least well-off households live within a five minute walk of green space.¹²⁶

ONS data provides a high-level overview of the public’s access to one such type of space, namely parks, gardens and playing fields that people may use to engage in sport and physical activity. The average distance to the nearest public park, public garden or playing field in England is 398.3m.¹²⁷ The average number of parks, public gardens and playing fields within a 1,000m radius in England is 4.2.¹²⁸ London is an outlier, as the only region that is a city itself.

Figure 10: Average distance to nearest park, public garden or playing field

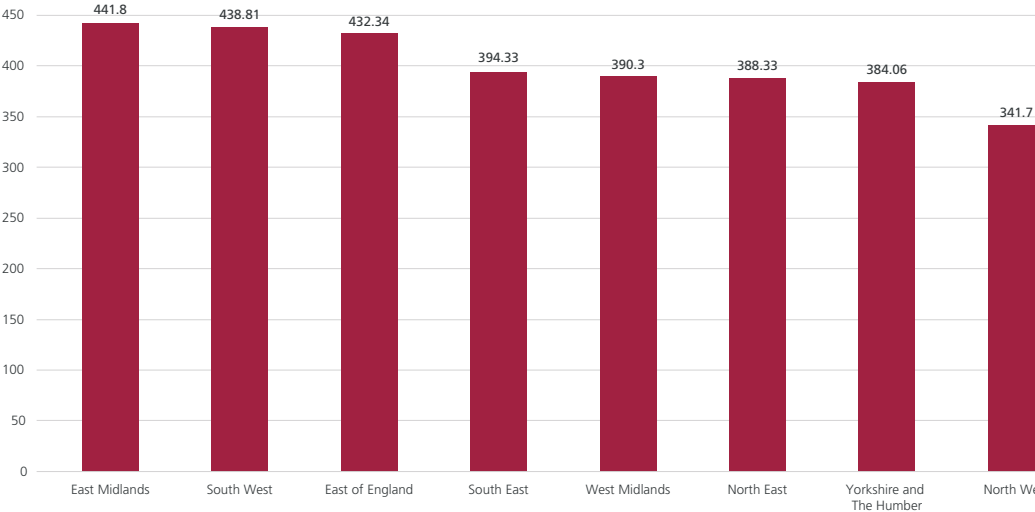
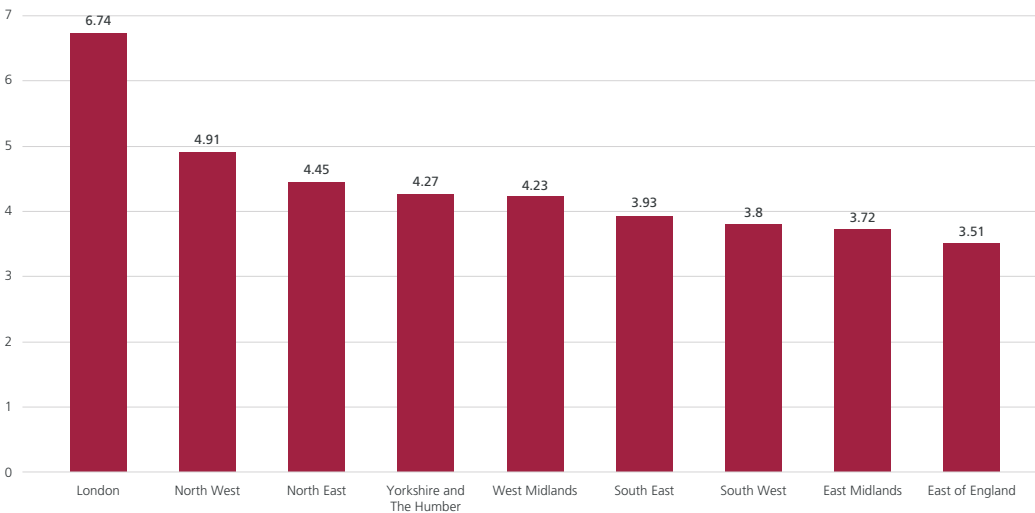


Figure 11: Average number of parks, public gardens or playing fields within a 1,000m radius



124 Ibid
125 Ibid
126 British Mountaineering Council, 2020. “The grass isn’t greener for everyone: why access to green space matters”
127 Office for National Statistics, 2020. “Access to gardens and public green space in Great Britain”
128 Ibid

According to a House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts report, on average, many of England's sporting facilities are 30 years old or more and in very poor condition.¹²⁹ 45 per cent of public park tennis courts, for example, are deemed to be in "poor, very poor or unplayable" condition.¹³⁰ And, one in four councils has potential plans to close leisure facilities, while over 40 per cent need to make cuts to physical activity services.¹³¹ Even school playing fields are under threat. Since 2015, 94 schools have sold their playing fields, impacting approximately 75,683 pupils.¹³²

1.17 Independent schools hold a disproportionate amount of the nation's sporting stock

With public facilities in disrepair and looming budget cuts, it is worth considering the stock of sports facilities that are owned by schools, and in particular, independent schools. Approximately 49 per cent of grass pitches and 76 per cent of sports halls in England are located on school sites.¹³³ This stock is not evenly distributed between the state and private sector. According to a 2019 National Governing Body survey, while accounting for just 10 per cent of all schools in England, independent schools hold 43 per cent of all sports halls, 32 per cent of all swimming pools, and 27 per cent of all playing fields.¹³⁴

According to the Independent Schools Council (ISC), access to leisure facilities is one of the "tremendous benefits" of a private education.¹³⁵ Giving evidence to the House of Commons DCMS Committee, Alastair Campbell had this to say: "let us be absolutely frank: the level of sporting provision in state schools, compared with the 7 per cent who use private schools, is a joke. We are nowhere near that level."¹³⁶ A 2015 study by the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference found that pupils at independent schools undertake on average three times as much sport and PE as those in state schools.¹³⁷

Making their sports facilities available for public use is one of the ways in which independent schools work with the state sector to meet the public benefit test required for charitable status. Partnership working between the independent and state sector is increasingly common. In the calendar year 2022, ISC schools reported 8,739 partnerships (equating to 63 per cent of private schools).¹³⁸ And, as at the January 2023 ISC census, there were 894 sport partnerships between independent schools and state schools.¹³⁹

129 House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2022. "[Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity](#)"

130 Ibid

131 HC Deb, 10 January 2023, c498 "[Sport in Schools and Communities: 10 Jan 2023: House of Commons debates - TheyWorkForYou](#)"

132 INews, 2022. "[Nearly 100 school playing fields sold off in seven years 'putting Lionesses legacy at risk'](#)"

133 House of Lords, 2021. "[National Plan for Sport and Recreation Committee](#)"

134 National Governing Bodies of Sport Survey, 2019.

135 Schools Week, 2016. "[Sports facilities in independent schools shame state sector](#)"

136 DCMS, May 2019. "[Changing Lives: The social impact of participation in culture and sport](#)"

137 The Telegraph, 2015. "[Independent schools do 'almost triple amount of sports than state counterparts'](#)"

138 Independent Schools Council, 2023. "[ISC Census and Annual Report 2023](#)"

139 Ibid

Conclusion

The chapters that follow will explore in greater detail how sports-based intervention can reduce youth crime by:

- Enabling re-engagement with education and learning
- Facilitating supportive adult relationships and role-modelling
- Creating safer, more cohesive local communities
- Linking young people to employment opportunities and financial inclusion
- Fostering positive mental health and mindsets

In each area, we translate the evidence base to show how intervention can most effectively support young people.

chapter two

How sport can reduce crime through educational engagement

In this section we explore how sport can be used as a hook to re-engage young people in learning and reduce the risk of crime.

2.1 Relationship to crime: disengaging with education is a clear risk factor for crime

One of the surest routes to reducing crime over the long term is ensuring children remain in school. This is clearly evidenced by our quantitative research. It adds weight to established academic and policy literature showing this, and confirms what parents and teachers know to be common sense: being engaged in education is a well-established protective factor against crime. Disengaging from education through missing classes, truanting, being excluded or suspended or not in education, employment or training (NEET) puts some children at greater risk of harm.

Research commissioned for this report has found that 14 to 17 year olds who are rarely or never absent from school are 2.3 times less likely to engage in low level crime or antisocial behaviour compared to those that are sometimes/always absent.

The Youth Endowment Fund's survey of more than 2,000 13 to 17 year olds reported similar findings. 55 per cent of children who were regularly missing classes reported experiencing violence directly or indirectly, compared with 31 per cent who did not.¹⁴⁰

Statistical Home Office analysis of serious violence-linked behaviours¹⁴¹ using the Millenium Cohort Study and E-Risk Longitudinal Study found that 14 year olds who truanted once a week were more likely to carry/use a weapon than those who never truanted, even when controlling for all other variables.¹⁴² These children had over eight times the odds of carrying or using a weapon compared to those who had not truanted in the last year.¹⁴³

140 Youth Endowment Fund, 2022. "Children, violence and vulnerability 2022: A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people's experience of violence"

141 Defined as weapons carrying or use and gang conflict

142 Home Office, 2019. "An analysis of indicators of serious violence: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study and the Environmental Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Twin Study"

143 Ibid

School exclusion was also statistically associated with weapons carrying/use.¹⁴⁴ Children who have been excluded from school are nearly six times more likely to carry/use a weapon compared to children who have never been suspended or excluded.¹⁴⁵ The same research also found that children who carried/used weapons reported lower levels of academic self-concept¹⁴⁶ than non-carriers/users.

Both victims and perpetrators of crime are also more likely to not be in education, employment or training (NEET).¹⁴⁷ Using data provided by youth charity Redthread on young people admitted to hospital for a serious violent incident and from a London Youth Offending Team, justice consultancy Crest found that 60 per cent of violent young offenders and 36 per cent of victims were NEET.¹⁴⁸ They also reported that the NEET cohort had higher levels of vulnerability than the wider group. For example, 28 per cent had been previously admitted to A&E for a serious violent incident (8 per cent higher than the wider grouping).¹⁴⁹

Remaining engaged in education, therefore, can mitigate against the risk of crime and exploitation, with former Children's Minister Vicky Ford commenting "keeping young people engaged in their learning can be absolutely vital in preventing them from being drawn into serious violence or exploited by gangs – especially in light of increased risks from the pandemic".¹⁵⁰

The long tail of lockdowns and successive school closures during the pandemic have exacerbated existing patterns of non-attendance that were ticking up prior to Covid. Previous CSJ research exposes a growing cohort of young people that are now severely absent from school, meaning they are out of school more than they are in school.¹⁵¹ At last count, these so-called 'ghost children' of lockdown numbered 125,222, representing a 108 per cent increase compared to before the pandemic and roughly 1.7 per cent of the total school population.¹⁵² Efforts to get them back into school are underway and sport and physical activity is one such example.

2.2 Why sport works: physical activity helps children to re-engage with education by providing additional opportunities to succeed in learning beyond academics

During the course of our investigation into severe absence, we heard how the benefits of sport and physical activity can be harnessed to tackle the issue.¹⁵³

Disengagement with the curriculum was a common theme throughout our focus group discussions. Stakeholders told us that children who are disengaged from school often have lower grades and feel pressured by the expectations at school. Some children get bullied because they are getting low grades in traditional subjects. Charities told us that these

144 Ibid

145 Ibid

146 Measured by how strongly they agreed/disagreed with the following statements: I am good at English / I am good at maths / I am good at Science.

147 Crest, 2021. "Violence and vulnerability"

148 Ibid

149 Crest, 2021. "Violence and vulnerability"

150 Department for Education, 2021. "Targeted support for vulnerable young people in serious violence hotspots"

151 Centre for Social Justice, 2023. "School absence tracker: A termly analysis of data relating to absence from school"

152 Ibid

153 Ibid

children are not given the same sense of reward in other non-academic areas where they have talents.

Kids know early on how they fall on a scale of academic achievement. We fail to value what they're good at and only look at what they're not good at. They're not able to do things that other people value and that's what ruins confidence. It's so important to value who they are and not who they aren't.

Diane, Passion For Learning

In our discussions, we heard about how extracurricular activities, such as sport, can be used to develop soft skills outside the curriculum, including leadership, determination and understanding another person's point of view. A fully academic curriculum only develops one part of a child and discounts those whose skills and talents are more practical.¹⁵⁴

As Conservative MP Tom Hunt put it in a House of Commons debate, *"if an individual does not feel like a success at school because they are not getting the success that they need, their needs are not being met, and they go back home and potentially there are problems with their home life, and there is nothing to do in their local area—no club for them to join, and they cannot get a sense of belonging from anywhere—the brutal reality is that, for some, joining a gang does give them that sense of belonging. The way to tackle that is to give them a positive sense of belonging. If we put ourselves in their shoes, we want to have the positive pulls and less of the negative pulls."*¹⁵⁵

Case study: Boxwise Glasgow, Sandaig Primary

Boxwise, a boxing charity, is embedded in schools across Glasgow offering children aged 8 to 16 the opportunity to be active, engaged and motivated. The headteacher of Sandaig Primary school had this to say:

"Over the last 10 weeks or so this club has proven to be an exceptional source of motivation, engagement, and positivity for all our children who have taken part. The football and boxing lessons undeniably played a significant role in fostering a sense of camaraderie, discipline, and a positive mindset among our children. The physical activities involved in these sports not only promote physical fitness but also teach valuable life skills such as teamwork, perseverance, and sportsmanship.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the football and boxing lessons has been its ability to keep the children engaged and motivated. Through these activities, they have developed a passion for sports, enhancing their self-esteem and instilling a sense of purpose. The club has provided a safe and supportive environment for the children to channel their energy, build their confidence, and start to develop a strong work ethic."

¹⁵⁴ Centre for Social Justice, 2023. "Lost and not found: How severe absence became endemic in England's schools"

¹⁵⁵ Westminster Hall Debate, 2022. "Youth crime and antisocial behaviour"

Dr Haydn Morgan from the University of Bath helps to draw this point out in his book, *Sport, physical activity and criminal justice: Politics, policy and practice*, which explores how sports-based relationships can differ from traditional teacher-student relationships which is of particular resonance for young people who feel excluded by traditional systems.

As Morgan's research explains, traditional school-based relationships are hierarchical whereas coaching relationships tend to be horizontal.¹⁵⁶ They are "constructed to emphasize dialogue which attunes to the themes and conditions that are visible in the lives of the participants ... and which serve as a foundation for co-creation of knowledge and a bridge for participants to convey their viewpoints and life-perspectives."¹⁵⁷

Sports-based programmes engaging marginalised or disadvantaged groups are therefore particularly well suited to fostering relationship that are: (i) trust-based, (ii) where young people feel valued and their abilities are recognised and (iii) which promote programme leaders as role models who understand the particular challenges young people face in their daily lives.¹⁵⁸

Another key element of the relational work that sports-based interventions can facilitate is the opportunity for praise and informal recognition which act as "precursors to social inclusion in youth populations".¹⁵⁹ According to Whittaker, informal structures of recognition such as "verbal praise or simply knowing that someone trusts and believes in you is of greater relevance to marginalised youth" than formal measures of recognition such as academic achievement from which they are often excluded.¹⁶⁰

Dyslexic children, for example, who typically have strong visual skills and good spatial awareness, may benefit from taking part in sport. The British Dyslexia Association describes it thus: "one area that many individuals thrive in is sport and physical activities. Sport can be a good way of increasing the self-esteem of dyslexic children".¹⁶¹ In fact, the European Dyslexia Association has just launched a research project on the topic.¹⁶²

"Sport helped me have hope as well. In school I wasn't the best in school. So I was always getting told 'you can't or you're not going to pass. You failed. Blah blah blah'. When I started boxing, it's like the simple 'well dones' it meant a lot. A couple of weeks ago after a fight my coach said 'I'm proud of you'. And them words stuck with me. I went home and that stayed in my mind, it made me feel like I'm worth something and I could achieve something. That's what it is for me."

Anon, lived experience roundtable

Providing more opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity offers these children the chance to shine, to see their skills recognised and to build a more positive sense of self outside narrowly, more strictly defined, academic categories of success. It's unsurprising,

¹⁵⁶ Morgan and Parker, 2022. "Sport, physical activity and criminal justice: Politics, policy and practice"

¹⁵⁷ Ibid

¹⁵⁸ Morgan et al, 2019. "Participation in sport as a mechanism to transform the lives of young people within the criminal justice system: an academic exploration of a theory of change"

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Morgan et al, 2019. "Participation in sport as a mechanism to transform the lives of young people within the criminal justice system: an academic exploration of a theory of change"

¹⁶¹ British Dyslexia Association, 2023. "Sport and dyslexia"

¹⁶² Ibid

therefore, that in many cases, targeted sports provision is the only thing that gets young people into school. As James Reeves of **Football Beyond Borders** put it, “sports coaches can create a positive association with school - thus driving attendance. Makes school a setting you want to go to.” We can see the same dynamic at work in the following case studies from Dallaglio RugbyWorks, Football Beyond Borders and Boxwise below.

Case study: Dallaglio RugbyWorks – reducing NEETs

Dallaglio uses rugby’s core values of teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline and sportsmanship to equip young people that are excluded from education, with the life skills and attitudes they need to move into sustained education, employment or training after school.

Their term-time programme offers participants in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 a year-long intervention underpinned by the four pillars of their theory of change including developing life skills, raising aspiration, improving physical wellbeing and focus on mental wellbeing.¹⁶³ It can be delivered as a preventative programme in a mainstream setting or with children in alternative provision (AP) who have already been excluded from school.

According to their 2021/22 impact report, 89 per cent of programme graduates progressed into sustained education, employment or training. For young people in AP, the national average is just 62 per cent.¹⁶⁴

Case study: Football Beyond Borders – preventing exclusion

Football Beyond Borders (FBB) are an education and social inclusion charity using the power of football to change young people’s lives.

FBB works with young people from areas of socio-economic disadvantage who are passionate about football but disengaged at school, to help them finish school with the skills and grades to make a successful transition into adulthood. They provide long-term, intensive support, built around relationships and young people’s passions, in the classroom and beyond.

In the academic year 2021/22, 95 per cent of young people they worked with finished the year in school and 95 per cent of their at-risk cohort were not excluded or managed moved (an arranged school move which often precedes an exclusion).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Dallaglio RugbyWorks. “Theory of Change”

¹⁶⁴ Dallaglio RugbyWorks, 2023. “2021-22 Social Impact Report”

¹⁶⁵ Football Beyond Borders, 2023. “Impact report 2021/22”

Case study: Boxwise Manchester – NEET programme

Boxwise is a sports charity that runs 10-week boxing programmes for disadvantaged youth through England affiliated boxing gyms up and down the country.

In Manchester, Fox ABC gym, sitting almost next door to Strangeways prison, runs a Boxwise programme for NEETs. On a site visit, their coach described the increased risk facing young people in this category. Without a job or education to attend, they face greater exposure to crime and gang affiliation. At the time of our visit, there had been three knife-related murders in the area in the last 12 months alone.

He believes that by getting these young people engaged in things they want to do, like boxing, you can, in his words, 'save them'. Education made fun and made right, can be a "turning point for young people in the pre-NEET category".

One way that theorists have attempted to explain the protective factor of education against youth crime has been through American criminologist Travis Hirschi's social bonding theory. He argues that strong attachments to society prevent deviation. Expressed another way, delinquent adolescents fail to develop important social bonds which can protect against crime. For Hirschi, the social bond consists of (i) attachment to parents, peers and school, (ii) commitment to work and education, (iii) involvement in activities that leave no time for crime and (iv) ¹⁶⁶ belief in a legitimate value system. ¹⁶⁷

The second element of the social bond has particular resonance here. Commitment refers to the investment made in conventional activities such as education. A child's education is threatened by delinquency. School age children "[...] who feel committed and invested in school via academics, extracurricular activities, leadership opportunities, and relationships with a good teacher, friend, or peer group, may be less likely to disengage from school and engage in delinquent activities."¹⁶⁸ Taking part in sport can provide the bridge by which children can become re-engaged or 'attached' to school, creating stronger social bonds and reducing the risk of delinquency.

2.3 Unlocking sport to promote engagement with education

For children who are disengaged from school because they struggle to engage in a traditional academic classroom context, providing more opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity is an important first step in reengaging with learning. As demonstrated in Chapter One, this matters deeply because habits formed in childhood are associated with a long-term trend in activity levels throughout later life.

Good habits, and a life-long love of sport, should be inculcated early, and schools, as universal services, are extremely well placed to facilitate this.

For many of us, our earliest experience of sport will be during primary school.

¹⁶⁶ Casey L. Biancur. "The Social Bond: Academic Fulfilment throughout Adolescence"

¹⁶⁷ Ibid

¹⁶⁸ Carolyn Gentle-Genitty. "Understanding Juvenile Delinquent Behavior through Social Bonding"

“Young people’s first experience of sport and physical activity is generally in primary school and this is where we start to get it wrong. Unfortunately, despite the huge investment that has gone in to trying to improve this area physical education still continues to be a poor experience for most ... If young people are turned off at this age it takes an almighty effort on transition to secondary school to get them to be active.”

New College Leicester

Good habits around sport and physical activity are built on positive experiences. In our call for evidence, we asked stakeholders to tell us about the barriers young people face in taking part in sport and physical activity.

“Sport and physical activity can represent shameful or embarrassing experiences for some young people so it is helpful to maintain a playful, light-hearted and inclusive atmosphere, which encourages acceptance and group connection, while at the same time providing opportunities for participants to grow and develop further should they wish.”

Achieve Thrive Flourish

Greater access to sport and physical activity is particularly urgent in the wake of the pandemic, where *“repeated school closures and slashed budgets ... mean that extra-curricular activity has been side-lined, and young people cannot access a varied and diverse set of opportunities they can choose to participate in.”* **Dallaglio Rugbyworks**

“I used to play football [in school] until year 9, and then in year 10 I broke my leg so I wasn’t fast anymore. When I came back my school just didn’t really focus on football, there wasn’t really any equipment, and a lot of girls didn’t play because there wasn’t anywhere to play anymore.”

Fatima, FBB Young Person

While curriculum reform is beyond the scope of this paper, we believe that schools have an important role to play in levelling the playing field and providing more – and better – opportunities for young people to engage in extracurricular activities, including sport and physical activity. For that reason, we were pleased to see that the Government has restated its commitment to “encouraging all schools to deliver a minimum of 2 hours’ PE time during the school day every week alongside equal access to sport for girls and boys.”¹⁶⁹ The Plan also makes it clear that two hours a week of sport should be “complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular sport and competitive opportunities”, though without stating how. While this is a welcome first step, we believe that more can – and should be – done.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ HM Government, 2023. [“School sport and activity action plan”](#)

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

2.4 A new Right to Sport is needed to ensure all have access to sport and physical activity

We are pleased that the Government has noted the importance of activity outside the school day in its recent sports strategy.¹⁷¹ The strategy references existing measures such as funding streams for sports and youth clubs, active travel to school schemes (e.g. cycling), and initiatives to open up school facilities. However, the crucial challenge is access to quality, structured extra-curricular sport—especially for socio-economically disadvantaged pupils. As such the Government must be more ambitious.

Therefore, the Government should announce a new Right to Sport for all secondary school pupils, underpinned by new funding to unlock five hours of extracurricular activity for every pupil in secondary schools in England. The Right to Sport would see all pupils participate in a minimum of two hours of extracurricular sport per week, on top of PE time already scheduled on the curriculum, closing the ‘activity gap’ between state school pupils and their independently educated peers.

This could take place before or after the school day and is not intended to replace existing provision which could be offset against this requirement. This means that a family whose children already undertake five hours of extracurricular activity in a school week would not be required to undertake anything further. Schools would facilitate, but not take the lead on, coordinating extracurricular activities, with charities, community and voluntary sector organisations leading the charge. For more information on potential delivery models, see Appendix.

The Independent Schools Council (ISC), a UK membership body for independent schools, estimates that ISC pupils spend, on average, 4 to 5 hours a week engaged in sport activities. This estimate is based on a 2017 survey of 1,301 schools in which schools were asked to record the numbers of hours pupils spent utilising non-academic facilities, such as dance halls and swimming pools, available at ISC schools.¹⁷² By aggregating the data and making reasonable assumptions about how many pupils could utilise each facility at any one time, it was possible to estimate the number of hours each pupil spends on average engaged in sporting activities.

State schools, in contrast, are encouraged to offer a minimum of two hours of PE each week, though this is not a statutory requirement. Research from the Youth Sport Trust suggests even that might be optimistic. According to their 2018 report on PE provision in secondary schools, the average number of curriculum PE minutes has declined by 20 per cent in Key Stage 3 and 38 per cent in Key Stage 4 over the last five years.¹⁷³ Further, this year’s annual School Workforce Census, which records the number of hours taught by qualified teachers in individual subjects in a typical week in state-funded secondary schools, saw 4,000 hours of PE teaching lost between this academic year and the previous one; a return to pre-pandemic levels.¹⁷⁴ While the recently announced £600m for the Primary PE and Sport premium is a welcome step in the right direction¹⁷⁵, we do not believe that is goes far enough. In fact, there are long-standing concerns that the funding is being misspent.¹⁷⁶

171 HM Government, 2023: “Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity” pp.35-37.

172 Independent Schools Council, 2017. “ISC Census and Annual Report”

173 Youth Sport Trust, 2018. “PE provision in secondary schools 2018: Survey Research Report”

174 Department for Education, 2023. “Subjects taught in state funded secondary schools’ from ‘School workforce in England; PE/Sports”

175 HM Government, 2023. “School Sport and Activity Action Plan Update”

176 Schools Week, 2018. “Investigation: Schools accused of fudging sport premium funding”

This inequality persists into after-school provision as well. CSJ/YouGov polling reveals that one in five primary and secondary pupils do no enrichment activities in an average week, rising to one in four pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Data from the Millennium Cohort Study, meanwhile, shows that, at age 14, almost half (45 per cent) of young people in the most affluent decile attend youth clubs, scouts or girl guides weekly, compared to a quarter (26 per cent) of the most deprived decile.¹⁷⁷ Young people from the most affluent decile were also three times more likely to sing in a choir or play in a band or orchestra weekly, compared to 15 per cent from the most deprived decile.¹⁷⁸

Introducing a new Right to Sport would effectively close the gap between the state and independent sector, equalising access to sport and physical activity and truly levelling the playing field.

Recommendation 4

The Government should announce a new Right to Sport for all secondary school pupils, underpinned by new funding to unlock five hours of extracurricular activity for every pupil in secondary schools in England. The Right to Sport would see all pupils participate in a minimum of two hours of extracurricular sport per week, on top of PE time already scheduled on the curriculum, closing the 'activity gap' between state school pupils and their independently educated peers.

Case Study: New College Leicester

Sport and Physical Activity can really help build communities. It's been a fantastic tool in helping turn around the fortunes of New College Leicester from being deemed one of the worst schools in the country to being one of the most popular in Leicester City.

Using an asset-based community development approach the school, along with key stakeholders, have created a whole system approach to providing multiple sporting opportunities outside of school hours. Open for 48 weeks of the year, 7 days a week the school is now one of the most used schools in the country for community sport.

The school is at the heart of a community that is deemed deprived and they are shaping a strategy to break the cycle of disadvantage and support social mobility. Sport and Physical activity are really playing their part in this approach.

This place-based approach creates a sense of belonging for communities and over time it can change a culture by building communities from the inside out. Local people owning the shift and really wanting to make a difference in their communities. New Parks in Leicester is a much better place thanks to the transformational work of New College Leicester in engaging the local community using sport as the vehicle to do that.

¹⁷⁷ Millenium Cohort Study, 2015.

¹⁷⁸ Millenium Cohort Study, 2015.

The schools sporting opportunities and the facilities have created a sense of pride. Where previously vandalism used to be a problem it is now non-existent as the school is policed by the local community using the school's facilities in a very productive and positive way

We have tried providing this type of extended school “enrichment” before, with highly promising results. Between 2003 and 2010, ‘extended services in schools’ were rolled out across the country offering a menu of activities including study support, play/recreation, sport, music, arts and craft and other special interest clubs, volunteering and business and enterprise activities. Below we offer a snapshot of the benefits reported by participating schools.

Table 2: School perceptions of the benefits of the “extended services in schools” programme, England, 2009

PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS REPORTING THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS	
Greater pupil enjoyment of school	82 per cent
Greater pupil engagement in learning	74 per cent
Helped them engage disadvantaged families	71 per cent
Greater parental engagement in children's learning	71 per cent
Had at least some influence in raising attainment	69 per cent
Better links between schools and their communities	68 per cent
Improved teacher/pupil relationships	61 per cent
Reduced behaviour or discipline problems	54 per cent
Improved attendance	45 per cent
Reduced number of exclusions	31 per cent

Source: DfE

More recently, the Welsh government trialled a £2m ten-week enrichment programme across 14 settings during the academic year 2021/22.¹⁷⁹ The additional enrichment sessions provided students with an extra hour each day for a broad range of activities including “sports and physical activities, creative activities, games, outdoor activities, and trips.”¹⁸⁰ Activities were run by third party providers as well as teaching staff, and the feedback from staff, parents and pupils has been highly positive.

91 per cent of pupils reported having fun during the activities and 84 per cent felt that the extra enrichment time helped them to socialise with their peers.¹⁸¹ In particular, working parents commented on the importance of having “a safe place for their children to be after school, where they were able to engage in constructive activities.”¹⁸² A spokesperson from the Welsh Government has revealed that they are now considering the trial findings in the context of their wider educational priorities and reforms.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Welsh Government, 2023. “Additional Enrichment Sessions Trial Evaluation: summary”

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

¹⁸¹ Ibid

¹⁸² Ibid

¹⁸³ Wales Online, 2023. “More trials of longer school days under consideration, says Welsh Government”

2.5 Simplifying the spaghetti junction of funding

The present spaghetti junction of funding for young people is a missed opportunity to move the dial on a range of social policy objectives that would support our children's health and wellbeing, educational engagement and safety. We propose creating a ring fenced Young People Fund paid directly to schools to roll out the Right to Sport to pupils in secondary school over the next two years. Arrangements should then be made to expand it to include primary schools. We outline our proposal in full below.

2.6 The cost of the policy

The cost of increasing extra-curricular activity provision for all pupils in state-funded secondary education is significant. By offering five hours of additional provision per week in each school week, this policy is in effect similar to extending the school day by one hour, albeit that provision would come primarily from staff and organisations outside the school.

Clearly, this kind of significant policy is not inexpensive. As such, we have sought to calculate the total projected cost, and (in the following section) demonstrate where Government can source existing finances to cover this cost using the best available data.

2.6.1 Calculating the unit cost per hour

Beginning with the unit cost of one hour's extracurricular activity for one pupil, the best available comparable Government programme would be the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. In 2021, this provided for 730,000 children to attend, of which 616,000 places were "directly funded by HAF"¹⁸⁴. This was a very large programme, and therefore of considerable value when estimating costs for a comparable (but larger) policy intervention: "HAF 2021 was delivered at considerably greater scale than previous HAF programmes, with funding totalling £220m available to all 151 local authorities in England to run clubs in the spring, summer and winter holidays."¹⁸⁵

There is reason to think that an extended extracurricular offer during term time would be even less expensive at unit cost level than that HAF programme because Local Authorities and providers could benefit from greater economies of scale, as the programme would be larger. We have not, however, sought to adjust the HAF figures to reflect this. As such, there is reason to believe our calculations reflect a conservative estimate of cost.

To calculate the unit cost, we must first begin with the total cost of the HAF programme. In the available evaluation data, we can base costs on the combined Easter and Summer programmes for which direct funding figures are available. The HAF evaluation makes clear that "In total approximately £129 million of direct HAF funding was used across the 151 LAs over Easter and summer 2021 [...]"¹⁸⁶

The programme differs in one significant way from our proposed policy: in that it requires the provision of food. As such, the headline total funding figure of the HAF programme factors

¹⁸⁴ Department for Education, 2022. "Evaluation of the 2021 holiday activities and food programme"

¹⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

this in, and this must be deducted. The HAF evaluation does not provide a disaggregation of this, but we can make an assumption around this using the cost of providing a comparable lunch at school.

The current Free School Meal (FSM) level of provision stands at £2.47 per meal.¹⁸⁷ Factoring one lunch per day, four days per week, over five weeks (four summer weeks and one Easter week), this would be a total of 20 lunches per child at a cost of £49.40 per child over the course of the programme. For the 616,000 fully funded children's places, we can estimate that food would be a total of £30,430,400. As such, the total programme cost excluding food for the Easter and Summer weeks would be £129m less food = £98,569,600.

From this figure, we can calculate the cost of one hour's provision.

During the Easter and Summer programmes, Government "[...] expected LAs to provide places for a minimum of four hours a day, four days a week, for four weeks (the 4x4x4 model) of the summer holidays to every FSM eligible child who wanted a place."¹⁸⁸ With an additional week at Easter, this means a total of 80 hours per child had to be delivered (4 x 4 x 5). With 616,000 children funded directly by HAF grant, we can estimate a total of 49,280,000 hours of provision. Dividing the total cost excluding food by the total hours, we can calculate a cost per hour of **£2.00 per hour**.

2.6.2 Calculating the total programme cost

Whilst we would ideally like the programme to cover costs for the whole state-funded school age population in England, we propose rolling it out during a two-year initial phase for the secondary school population only. This total population is 3,630,171.¹⁸⁹ Each of these pupils would receive 5 hours of extracurricular activity per week, equivalent to one hour per day, during the minimum 190 school days each year.¹⁹⁰ This would mean a total of 190 hours per pupil per year.

Overall, then, the programme would need to deliver 190 hours each for 3,630,171 pupils, which would total 689,732,490 hours of provision. At £2 per hour, this would total a cost of just under **£1.38bn**.

2.6.3 Funding the programme in a cost-neutral way

We are confident that a comprehensive package of extracurricular activity would make a very substantial positive impact on government finances from the many ways in which it would prevent the need from spending elsewhere—not least including health outcomes, policing, and more. However, we believe the Government does not need to rely on such an argument for funding purposes. As we demonstrate below, despite its significant cost, the policy can be funded through existing pots of Government money intended for a similar purpose, and through introducing a number of levies related to improving health and channelling sports funds towards the common good.

187 LACA, 2022. "LACA survey finds price of school lunch expected to rise further in 2023".

188 Department for Education, 2022. "Evaluation of the 2021 holiday activities and food programme"

189 See table *Number of schools and pupils, by school type, 2015/16 to 2022/23*. State-funded Secondary, Headcount-total, 2022-23. "Schools, pupils and their characteristics"

190 Department for Education, 2023. "Length of the school week: Non-statutory guidance"

FUNDING SOURCE	TOTAL AVAIL- ABLE	PROPOSED CON- TRIBUTION	RATIONALE
Soft Drinks Industry Levy	Approx £330m per annum	100 per cent	<p>Announced by George Osborne in 2016, and introduced in 2018, the levy was originally intended to support the government's childhood anti-obesity strategy.¹⁹¹</p> <p>Nevertheless, a 2022 FOI to the Department for Education, who in previous years administered large proportions of the funding, revealed that the funds are "no longer directly linked to any specific programmes, or departmental spending".¹⁹²</p> <p>Separate FOI requests to local authorities regarding spend indicated a worrying lack of oversight, with some reporting they had no records of where the funds were spent.</p> <p>Directing these funds towards the Right to Sport is in keeping with the spirit of the levy's original objective and would ensure greater accountability on spend, being used to fund extracurricular opportunities including sport and physical activity, helping to tackle obesity and driving up activity levels.</p>
Dormant Assets Scheme	£738m tranche	25 per cent £184.5m	<p>The Scheme is an industry-led voluntary initiative established in 2011 which is backed by the UK Government and regulators. Through it, banks and building societies pay dormant monies to an authorised reclaim fund which then puts this money towards funding good causes. Last year, the scheme was expanded to include assets from the investment sector, increasing the overall amount substantially.</p> <p>Following public consultation earlier this year, the Government announced youth, along with financial inclusion, social investment wholesalers, and community wealth funds as the key beneficiaries of the English portion of the funds.¹⁹³</p> <p>We propose allocating the youth investment portion of the scheme's fund towards the Right to Sport. The package provides unmatched, universal access, to children and young people, providing a wide-ranging and varied menu of enrichment activity that would meet the scheme's objectives, namely the "provision of services, facilities, or opportunities to meet the needs of young people."¹⁹⁴</p>

191 HM Gov, 2017. "Childhood obesity: a plan for action"

192 Telegraph, 2022. "Bitter row sugar tax millions diverted away from fighting childhood obesity"

193 DCMS, 2023. "Millions released from dormant accounts to support vulnerable people with cost of living"

194 DCMS, 2023. "Government response to the consultation on the English portion of dormant assets funding"

FUNDING SOURCE	TOTAL AVAILABLE	PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION	RATIONALE
Solidarity Transfer Levy	£280m	100 per cent	<p>The 2021 independent review of football governance proposes, among other things, the introduction of a 10 per cent Solidarity Transfer Levy to help rebalance the football pyramid. The levy would work in a similar way to stamp duty and distribute revenues across the pyramid and into the grassroots.¹⁹⁵ According to the most recent figures, Premier League Clubs spent £2.8bn during the 2022-23 transfer season.¹⁹⁶</p> <p>As the most popular sport in the country, Premier League clubs can – and should – do more to support the grassroots. We recommend that the revenue raised from the levy should be allocated to the Right to Sport, helping to inspire the next generation of footballers and instilling a lifelong love of physical activity.</p>
Raise the bank profit surcharge by one percentage point, from 3 per cent to 4 per cent	£2.4bn ¹⁹⁷	£300m	<p>While banks have emerged unscathed from the crisis and awash with profits, the same cannot be said for our young people. Banks have benefitted in three ways: bumper profits, rising interest rates and reserves held on deposit overnight at the Bank of England.¹⁹⁸ At the last autumn budget, the Chancellor reduced the surcharge on profits from 8 to 3 per cent, while raising corporation tax from 19 per cent to 25 per cent.</p> <p>Given the extraordinary financial situation, we recommend a 1 percentage point increase to the profit surcharge from 3 per cent to 4 per cent yielding approximately £300m for the Right to Sport.</p>
Vaping excise duty	£414m	100 per cent	<p>We support calls by Action on Smoking and Health for an excise duty on single use vapes.¹⁹⁹ We propose a £3, rather than £4, excise duty which would raise approximately £414m towards the Right to Sport.²⁰⁰ Single use vapes are the cheapest electronic cigarettes on the market, and their use by young people who currently vape has jumped from 8 per cent in 2021 to 52 percent in 2022.²⁰¹ Vaping, though less harmful than smoking, is not risk free, and there are growing concerns regarding the increase in illegal sales to under 18s and the increasing number of young people who have never tried cigarettes that are vaping.²⁰²</p> <p>We recommend a £3 excise duty on single use vapes to help discourage under-age vaping and to prevent countless young people from becoming addicted, refocusing efforts – and investment – on positive, life-enhancing activities delivered through our package of sport and extracurricular activity instead.</p>

195 DCMS, 2021. "Fan-led review of football governance: securing the game's future"

196 BBC, 2023. "Transfer deadline day: Premier League Clubs shatter spending records in January window"

197 UK Finance, 2022. "2022 total tax contribution of the UK banking sector"

198 FT, 2022. "Jeremy Hunt lines up raid on bank profits to help fill £40bn UK fiscal hole"

199 Evening Standard, 2023. "Call for excise tax on disposable vapes to deter children"

200 About 138m single-use vapes are now sold in the UK each year, containing enough lithium for about 1,200 electric vehicle batteries.

201 Evening Stand, 2023. "Call for excise tax on disposable vapes to deter children"

202 The Guardian, 2023. "UK campaigners call for tighter regulations on vapes to match tobacco"

2.6.4 Funding the programme over the longer-term

As stated above, we recommend rolling out the Right to Sport in secondary schools first, with primary schools following suit – and funds made available in respect thereof – after the first two years. To that end, we have begun to identify potential sources of future funding which we have set out in the table below.

FUNDING SOURCE	TOTAL AVAILABLE	PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION	RATIONALE
Primary PE and Sport Premium	Approx £300m per annum	100 per cent	<p>Statutory guidance states that schools should use the premium to make “additional and sustainable improvements to the PE, sport and physical activity they provide”.²⁰³ Expanding on this further, it goes on to identify increasing the engagement of all pupils in regular physical activity and sport as a key priority area.²⁰⁴</p> <p>Nevertheless, evidence uncovered by a Schools Week investigation reveals weak oversight, with only 60 per cent of primary schools compliant with reporting requirements.²⁰⁵ In comments shared with the paper, teachers described the funding as a “Wild West”, where “anything goes and you can spend the money on whatever you want”.²⁰⁶</p> <p>While the recent School Sport and Activity Action Plan outlines a new, mandatory, reporting requirement and tool, we believe that the premium should be re-allocated towards the Right to Sport instead. This would help to ensure consistency across the school estate and help to level up sporting and extracurricular opportunities for all pupils.</p>
Wraparound Childcare	£289m over two years	100 per cent	<p>In the Spring budget, the Chancellor announced that primary schools will be funded to increase the supply of wraparound care so all school-age parents can drop their children off between 8am and 6pm.²⁰⁷ This ‘startup funding’ will be made available over the next three years for schools and councils to “test options to increase the availability of wraparound childcare in the longer term”.²⁰⁸</p> <p>This funding could go much further and faster. As mentioned earlier, we have already trialled extended services in schools with highly promising results. Over time, this funding should go directly towards supporting combined extra-curricular activity and childcare provision.</p>
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	£2.6bn (April 2022 – March 2025)	25 per cent £650m	<p>The Fund is a central pillar of the UK government’s Levelling Up agenda and a significant component of its support for places across the UK. It provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition.²⁰⁹ One of its three central missions is to reduce crime in the worst-affected areas by 2030.</p> <p>Following the close of the first funding round, 25 per cent per cent of the next phase should be ring-fenced for the Right to Sport. Re-engagement is a pivotal first step in supporting young people away from crime, helping them to pursue a more positive path and gain the necessary skills and social capital to succeed as after school.</p>

203 Wales Online, 2023. “More trials of longer school days under consideration, says Welsh Government”

204 Schools Week, 2018. “Investigation: Schools accused of fudging sport premium funding”

205 Ibid

206 Ibid

207 Education Business UK, 2023. “Funding for schools to provide wraparound care”

208 Ibid

209 Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2022. “UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus”

2.7 To maximise participation among disadvantaged young people, the Government should level up its use of social outcomes contracting

Previous attempts to provide enrichment before and after the school day demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils are less likely to engage in extracurricular activities than their more affluent peers.²¹⁰

The evaluation of 1,500 extended services schools between 2003 and 2010 revealed that pupils who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) took up, on average, fewer hours of activities per week than their peers.²¹¹ In addition, schools with higher levels of FSM pupils were more likely than those with lower levels to agree with the statement “this school struggles to engage disadvantaged pupils and families in extended services activities.”²¹²

Previous CSJ research corroborates this. According to the results of the CSJ-YouGov polling exercise, one in five (19.6 per cent) parents in England report that their primary or secondary school children do no enrichment activities in an average week.²¹³ This rises to one in four of those in the lowest social grades.²¹⁴

As a result, thought must be given to how this disengagement risk is tempered. Children at risk of crime in particular are likely to face greater barriers to engagement with education than their peers. They typically have higher levels of special educational need and are more likely to have been absent or excluded from school.²¹⁵

Therefore, while the long-term goal is to engage every child – including those that are most vulnerable – in extracurricular activity, we recognise that additional measures will be necessary to engage this cohort in the short to medium term. We suggest this is best achieved by commissioning frontline charities that already work with this group through social outcomes contracting or ‘outcomes partnerships’.

This payment by results model would help incentivise organisations working with young people at risk of offending to reintegrate them back into school, mitigating the risk associated with the money following the child. We would suggest a requirement to work with schools to manage risk and deliver ad-hoc training to staff members involved in the child’s care. This highly personalised approach would benefit those with the highest support needs and, over the long-term, deliver value for money for the taxpayer as well as cascading specialist training to teachers.

Outcomes Partnerships bring together social investors, government agencies and third sector delivery partner where the social investor bears the risk and government only pays out when pre-agreed outcomes are achieved.²¹⁶ For more detailed information, please see the factsheet in the Appendix.

210 Centre for Social Justice, 2021. “A level playing field: Why we need a new school enrichment guarantee and how to deliver it”

211 Department for Education, 2010. “[Extended Services Evaluation: End of year one report](#)”

212 Ibid

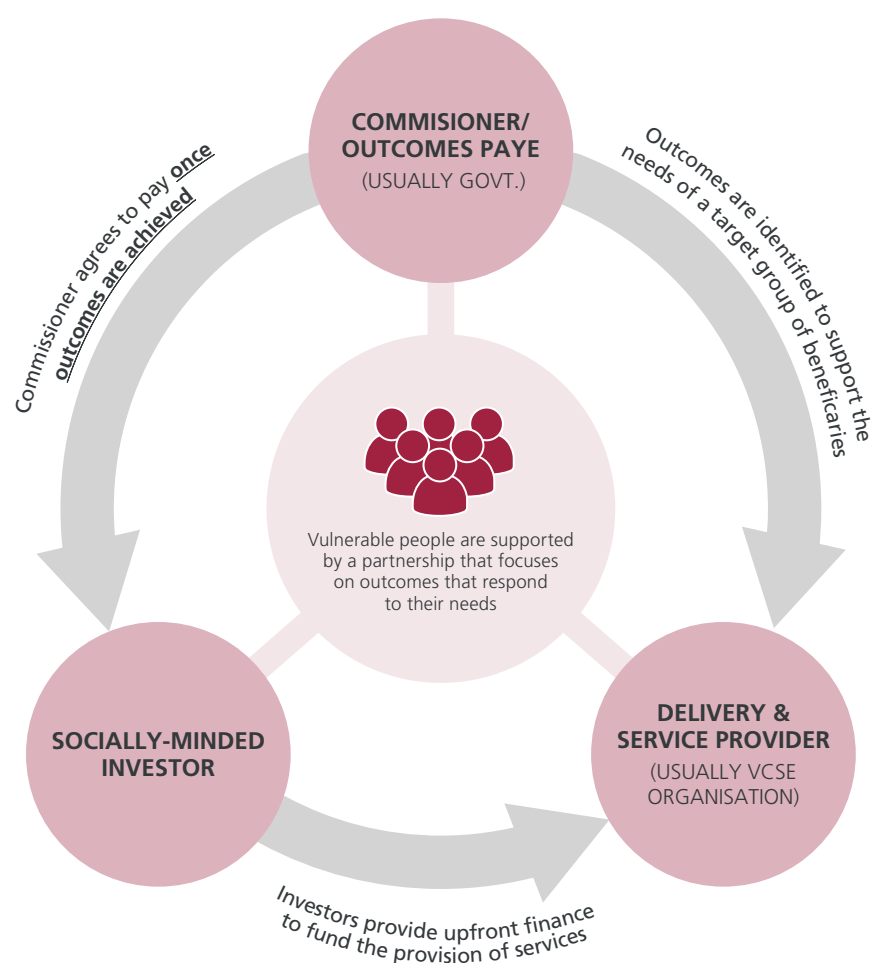
213 Ibid

214 Ibid

215 IntegratED, 2021. “[2021 Annual Report](#)”

216 Cabinet Office, 2022. “[Social Outcomes Partnerships and the Life Chances Fund](#)”

Figure 12: How outcomes contracting works



Source: Cabinet Office

As our research has shown, for many organisations working with at-risk youth through sport, re-engagement with education is often an important step in diverting young people away from offending. The third sector already plays a key role in delivering positive social outcomes through sport, and we believe the time has come for government to formally recognise this. Initiatives, like the Chances social impact bond (SIB) – also referred to as Outcomes Partnerships – funded under DCMS, are showing promising early results.

The Chances programme is a four-year project launched in November 2020 to support disengaged young people from deprived backgrounds to attend school more regularly, gain qualifications, get into training, reduce or avoid offending whilst also improving their levels of physical literacy.

Chances is the world's first sports-based social outcomes partnership, and the largest social outcomes partnership in the world. Chances is co-commissioned by 21 local authorities and works with 16 delivery partners including professional football clubs, community organisations and other youth, community and sport providers. Each organisation uses its extensive experience and expertise to support disadvantaged and vulnerable young people – up to 6000 in total during the lifetime of the programme.

Chances SIB – Example of current KPIs²¹⁷

Overview

The Chances social impact bond (SIB) is funded under DCMS's Life Chances Fund.

The SIB aims to use sport and physical activity to provide new opportunities and alternative life pathways for children and young people in disadvantaged areas whilst improving their health and wellbeing.

Employment, education and training

Improvement in school or Pupil Referral Unit attendance of each 10 per cent over three full terms compared to the full term immediately prior to referral to the programme.

Achievement of a recognised sports qualification / coaching award started during any quarter.

Reducing offending

Reduction in re-offending of young people who have offended once or are subject to a Pre-Court Disposal Order in the 12 months prior to referral into the programme.

Reduction of young people who have offended three times or more in previous 12-month period by one third over the year following referral. No further offending over each three-month period following engagement.

Chances Programme – June 2023 results

- **4,259** young people have been actively engaged in Chances
- **Over 5,800** outcomes have been achieved triggering £2.4 million in outcome payments so far. Including:
 - **1327** recognised qualifications achieved
 - **102** work placements of 30 hours completed
 - **390** reductions in offending behaviour evidenced
 - **242** improvements in school attendance evidenced
 - **3771** improvements in physical literacy at mid and end points

Government is well positioned to build on some of the great work that has already been done, including through the Shared Outcomes Fund and the more recent Life Chances Fund, to catalyse further Outcomes Partnerships across the country that will effectively help support some of the nation's neediest and most complex cohorts. A 2022 independent

²¹⁷ Government Outcomes Lab, 2022. "Chance"

evaluation of 72 SIBs found that, for every £1 spent by Government, £10.20 of public value was generated.²¹⁸ These “creative funding routes” should not be overlooked, and we were encouraged to see them referenced in the Government’s recently published sport strategy.²¹⁹

To unlock the power of Outcomes Partnerships, and to unleash the potential of the third sector, we recommend that Government:

Establish a £1bn outcomes fund to transform the way public services address complex social needs, including preventing youth offending through sport. This central fund, supervised by Treasury and managed by a specialist team, would be allocated to outcomes payment programmes across key department and policy areas. This would be a bold next step in commitments made at previous Spending Reviews to ramp up progress on joining up funding across government departments through the Social Outcomes Fund.²²⁰

Establish standards for data collection and commission an open platform for reporting on outcomes, impact and learnings that is supervised by Treasury and managed by a specialist team. This would create a step change in Government’s ability to compare the cost per person and cost per success of different cohorts and improve commissioning functions and capabilities nationally and locally. It would also allow for the monitoring and recording of qualitative learnings to build a holistic picture of what success look like and identify where improvements can be made.

Recommendation 5

Government should establish a new, £1bn, outcomes fund to tackle complex social problems, including youth offending, as well as corresponding standards for data collection.

While taking part in sport and physical activity can support reengagement with education, it is not a panacea. Through our call for evidence, we also heard about dwindling support services in schools and school exclusion being used to push out children that struggled to access the curriculum, often owing to unmet or undiagnosed learning needs.

“A few of our young people also stated that some of the most pressing challenges included inadequate academic support. Some schools have been found to exclude students in order to improve school results ... This often puts students under undue pressure to perform better to not be excluded.”

Dallaglio RugbyWorks

Recommendation 6

Notable by its absence in the SEND Improvement Plan, the Government should review the evidence for the role sport can play in supporting students with special educational needs.

218 Big Society Capital, 2022. “Outcomes For All – a look back at a decade of social outcomes contracts”

219 DCMS, 2023. “Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity”

220 HM Treasury, 2020. “Spending Review, 2020” [Accessed via: [Spending Review 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/434212/Spending_Review_2020.pdf)]

chapter three

How sport can reduce crime by strengthening families and relationships

3.1 Relationship to crime: Family breakdown can put young people at risk of crime

The evidence shows that experiencing four or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) increases the likelihood of entering the youth justice system sevenfold in England.²²¹ Victims and perpetrators of youth crime often have complex home lives and difficult family relationships. This ranges from low-level conflict such as arguing with parents to much more significant harm including abuse, neglect and being taken into care.

While not of the same order of magnitude as an ACE, fraught family relationships can also negatively impact on a young person, including increasing their risk of becoming involved in violence. According to Home Office analysis of serious violence linked behaviours (SVLB) using data from the Millennium Cohort Study, elements of both family relationships and family structure are related to SVLBs. Arguing with mother and arguing with father were significantly associated with weapon carrying/use.²²² Respondents arguing most days with their mother or father had over twice the odds of carrying/using a weapon than those who never or hardly ever argue with them.²²³

Living in a household without a father present or with no father contact was also significantly associated with weapon carrying/use.²²⁴ 8.7 per cent of non-weapon carriers/users said that they had no father or no father contact, whereas 16.7 per cent of weapon carriers/users reported having no father or no father contact.²²⁵

In a similar vein, a higher percentage of weapon carriers/users compared with non-carriers/users live with only their natural mother (25.8 per cent of non-carriers/users, 38.5 per cent of carriers/users). The number of siblings in the household was also a significant indicator of weapon carrying/use. Children in families with no siblings or four or more siblings had nearly twice the odds compared to those with only one sibling.²²⁶

221 Commission on Young Lives, 2022. "Hidden in Plain Sight"

222 Home Office, 2019. "An analysis of indicators of serious violence: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study and the Environmental Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Twin Study"

223 Ibid

224 Ibid

225 Ibid

226 Ibid

In working to build a profile of young offenders, criminal justice consultancy Crest analysed data provided by a London Youth Offending Team that included 32 young people cautioned or convicted for a serious violence offence and 25 young people involved in a serious violence incident in the previous year.²²⁷

The group displayed high levels of vulnerability including being care experienced (n=43), looked after (n=25) and being a child in need (n=32).²²⁸ All three are categories of vulnerability that require some level of state intervention in family life to support healthy childhood development. Further, half had experienced domestic abuse or maltreatment at home: 14 had been exposed to domestic abuse, 23 were on a child protection plan and 27 had experienced familial harm.²²⁹

Research from the Home Office using data from the E-Risk Longitudinal Study reveals that children who have experienced maltreatment (defined as physical, sexual, or emotional abuse/neglect by an adult) have just over twice the odds of being involved in SVLBs compared to those have experienced no maltreatment.²³⁰

Research by the Youth Endowment Fund surveying 2,000 young people aged 13 to 17 also revealed a correlation between family life and experience of violence directly or indirectly. For example, 60 per cent of children supported by a social worker and 42 per cent of children not from a two-parent household reported experiencing violence directly or indirectly compared 31 per cent of children not from one of those backgrounds.²³¹

Superintendent John Sutherland of Islington Borough Police put it this way in our 2018 report on gang violence in London, *Dying to belong*, “at the heart and soul of it is the breakdown of the family...It is not fashionable to say, but absolutely, unequivocally, any attempt to address these issues without addressing the breakdown of the family will only have limited impact”.²³²

Qualitative data gathered for this report adds further evidence to the relationship between family structure and risk of crime. During a roundtable conducted with 14 young people aged 16 to 32 with lived experience of crime and/or prison, we heard time and again about the difficulties of being raised in households without a father and where crime was considered part of everyday life.

“My mum gave me my first ounce when I was a kid. This is the household I grew up in. I could never tell my mum no. She’d look at me crazy. We come from the hustle background. Go out and get that stuff by any means necessary...It’s kinda hard to grow up in a background like that with a real soldier as a mum.”

Anon, Lived experience roundtable

227 Crest, 2021. “Violence and vulnerability” [Accessed via: [Violence and Vulnerability Crest Report \(usrfiles.com\)](#)]

228 Ibid

229 Ibid

230 Home Office, 2019. “An analysis of indicators of serious violence: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study and the Environmental Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Twin Study”

231 Youth Endowment Fund, 2022. “Children, violence and vulnerability 2022: A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people’s experiences of violence”

232 Centre for Social Justice, 2009. “Dying to belong: An in-depth review of street gangs in Britain”

The language of war is striking. For some young people, the battle begins at home, spilling out into every other aspect of life and creating a cycle of intergenerational offending that is difficult to break free from. According to statistical analysis commissioned for this report, adults who report that neither themselves nor anyone close to them were in trouble with the police as children are 1.86 times more likely not to engage in low level crime or antisocial behaviour compared to those who reported having police contact.

Growing up in a single parent home with the emotional and financial instability left behind also emerged as an explanatory factor for crime-related activity during our roundtable discussion.

"Having to be the 'man of the house'. I feel like I had a lot on my shoulders, trying to provide for my sisters and my mum. So yeah that was really heard. I had to fend for myself, not doing the wrong things, I was very hard-headed."

Anon, Lived experience roundtable

A lack of open dialogue in the home also emerged as an important theme. As the excerpts below illustrate, in some cases, a young person, feeling alone and vulnerable, may then turn to unsafe people for support.

"...there's the lack of the open dialogue at home. So not being able to actually express what you feel and fear at home. For example... I'm Year 7. I got robbed. I can't go home to my single mom and tell her I got robbed because what's she going to do? So I internalise that, but then I remember that there's them Year 11s, that looks really tough. And they always looking at me and saying I'm cool. So what do I start to do? Emulate some of their behaviours. And then I think it's a snowball effect from there. So I really think home dynamic plays a really big challenge for young people. The lack of opportunity for them to have open dialogue at home and mentorship."

Anon, lived experience roundtable

"I feel like one of the biggest challenges they face is a lack of mentorship overall, and the lack of mentorship trickles into the family, the positive family structure because at home you could argue that your parents could be your mentors, and if you don't have parents that are mentors, and then you don't have an external influence, where do you seek to find your guidance?"

Anon, lived experience roundtable

Family dysfunction, the coaches were keen to point out, does not discriminate by socio-economic status. One of the coaches described a young man he worked with from an affluent background and living in a five-bedroom house in the following terms:

"He wanted more for himself'. He felt like he just wanted to provide more for himself like he wanted that that sense of being a man that I can provide for myself and I think that as a young man, everybody wants to be the man. You can get pocket money from your mum, and you still go outside and say 'I want to earn my own pocket money'."

BoxUp Coach, lived experience roundtable

In addition to a lack of positive family structure, the young people we spoke to also told us about the lack of adult role models in their lives. One of the young men at our roundtable expressed it this way:

“So I think I’m not having enough positive role models on my estate growing up. I feel like that took a big impact on me because I didn’t know no better. You know, I mean? I think if there was a positive person on my estate I would have took to the positive more than the bad, but the bad was just around me 24/7 and I was surrounded by the streets in South London...So I think the lack of positive role models back then for me was zero to none, no, nothing. So, yeah, I feel that’s a big challenge.”

Anon, lived experience roundtable

3.2 Why sport works: sport and physical activity provide fertile ground for strong supportive relationships

There is recognition in public policy that strong, supportive relationships are crucial to reducing crime. As we show, sports-based interventions can be an ideal environment to promote this—especially where family life is fractured.

According to the Youth Endowment Fund’s 2021 technical report²³³ of secondary and tertiary sports interventions based on a review of 61 studies, there are several causal pathways by which sport may reduce reoffending. Two of these are strongly relational causal pathways, including role modelling and mentoring.

As the preceding section demonstrates, young people at risk of crime often have complex home lives with difficult family relationships. As a result, it is perhaps unsurprising that the relational aspect of sports-based interventions for this group is often cited as the most critical element in understanding ‘why sport works?’²³⁴

Trust between participant and coach is paramount and is the foundation upon which behaviour change can begin to take place. Sport for development charity, Empire Fighting Chance, which uses non-contact boxing and intensive personal support to help guide at-risk youth away from crime and towards making positive change, put it this way in their response to our call for evidence:

“Young people will only listen to us if we have earned their trust. This can be challenging as their relationships with adults are often characterised by inconsistency, neglect and violence. Young people gain support from someone they can relate to and feel comfortable talking with – a young coach or therapist kitted out in tracksuit bottoms and an ‘Empire hoodie’. Our staff use boxing to build rapport with young people and encourage them to relax, drop their guard and open up to us.”

Empire Fighting Chance

233 Youth Endowment Fund, 2021. “Sports programmes: Technical toolkit report”

234 Morgan & Parker, 2017; Morgan et al., 2021a; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013

Or, to put it another way:

"The young person's previous experiences with interventions can lead them not to trust in you so relationships can take time to build. These young people might have had poor experiences so they have low expectations and a negative attitude toward life."

Achieve Thrive Flourish

Within the context of a sports-based programme, trust is created from the social climate set by leaders and coaches where positive actions are recognised and rewarded by staff.²³⁵ Such positive interactions act as a point of difference in the life experience of young people who "often lack positive relationships with adults or authority figures."²³⁶

"Before this [skills] development starts, you'll need to gain the trust and build relationships with the young people before they'll start talk to you."

Active Leeds

²³⁵ Morgan et al, 2019. "Participation in sport as a mechanism to transform the lives of young people within the criminal justice system: an academic exploration of a theory of change"

²³⁶ Ibid



Case study: Achieve Thrive Flourish (ATF) Boxing – building relationships over time

Emily* aged 15 was referred for ATF via the Youth Offending Team. She was not attending her alternative education provision and was awaiting sentence for 14 offences that took place in a two-month period. She had no constructive use of time or any positive pastimes in her life and this was significantly impacting her self-worth. Her convictions included possession of weapons, threats to harm and racially aggravated behaviour offences. There were risks of exploitation and missing incidents overnight. She had suffered with multiple serious mental health crises including self-harm, multiple suicide attempts and temporary section for treatment and uses cannabis and alcohol.

Emily refused to do anything other than boxing and her coach couldn't convince her to try anything else. She had no ambition and would become very frustrated at any conversations regarding her future. Her engagement was slow, and she struggled to make conversation with her coach initially, however Emily would always turn up for her ATF boxing sessions.

Over time Emily developed a great relationship with Pete, her ATF Boxing Coach, Louise ATF Youth Intervention Coach, her Youth Offending Worker and her Reparation Worker Paul, this collaborative work enabled us to support her intensively. One day Emily agreed to go to the gym, she enjoyed this and began to widen her horizons. As part of her reparation Paul took Emily to sessions as an usher at the local theatre. She loved this and further widened her interests. Emily's trust in her workers increased and she began to communicate about her worries, and we were able to support her more. She became open to counselling and started regular sessions, a huge step forward for her. Her engagement increased as did her self-worth and her ability to see that she has opportunities in life.

Although Emily still struggles with low mood and thoughts of self-harm occasionally there have been no incidents of self-harm and she is engaging with the mental health service and counselling weekly. She continues her ATF boxing sessions and has stopped smoking cannabis and alcohol entirely. There have been 2 missing incidents, but these were not overnight and there have been none in the past 3 months. She has had no further offending and no arrests since being supported by ATF.

This 'connection before correction' approach recognises the importance of first establishing trust before moving onto anything else. Culturally, this flips the dominant narrative on its head. Morgan et al, in *Sport, physical activity and criminal justice: Politics, policy and practice*, describes a young offender's institute in New Zealand which has adopted this approach. It uses an indigenous informed "Six-C framework" which begins with connection.²³⁷ They first focused on ensuring the young people "cared and were cared for, were connected to and contributed positively to the collective unit", then focused on developing competence, confidence and skills later.²³⁸

237 Morgan and Parker, 2022. "Sport, physical activity and criminal justice: Politics, policy and practice"

238 Ibid

As one staff member reflected: “we invested in resources, sports equipment, music equipment, we started to motivate kids to behave rather than consequences for not ... every other YJR [roughly, the New Zealand equivalent of a Young Offenders Institution] was spending NZ\$1million a year [roughly £500k] on damaged property and we were spending zero! So, we just continued to spend money to save money ...”²³⁹

Out of a place of connection and trust, young people are better able to open up to – and share with – practitioners the challenges they may be facing.

“We use non-contact boxing as the engagement tool to support vulnerable young people transform their lives. A boxing gym is a non-stigmatising space in which young people can be open about the challenges they face, away from a clinical setting. Young people are able to process how they are feeling, and reduce their risk of antisocial behaviour.”

Empire Fighting Chance

Consistency is also key. As the Commission on Young Lives puts it, “the time and effort involved in building these long-term, trusted, culturally sensitive, sustainable and impactful relationships with vulnerable children, their families and marginalised communities is not something that can be cobbled together overnight”.²⁴⁰

This echoes the literature which makes it clear that “achieving long-term change with young people requires a long-term commitment to those young people. The offer needs to be consistent, and engagement needs to be over a long period either within the project or by linking to other opportunities.”²⁴¹ It is considered best practice for familiar figures to lead sessions, ensuring a consistency that allows young people to develop trusting and friendly relationships.²⁴² Below, a Dallaglio coach cites an example from her sessions at a drop-in centre for excluded young people in a community centre.

“It took her north of four months of weekly sessions and interactions to finally get a set of male young people in Year 9 to play a well-structured game of football with her on a pitch. Aside from behavioural issues, most of the participants simply weren’t interested in engaging with our coach and didn’t want to participate. However, over time and with consistent presence and interactions with a trusted adult, the young people eventually started engaging with her and gradually started building enthusiasm for sessions. It also helped that a few of the young people at these sessions were also former students of the coach and hence there was some trust and familiarity already built up, highlighting the need for long-range interventions.”

Dallaglio RugbyWorks Coach

The staff working in this sector, are clearly a key asset. Very often they have themselves overcome personal trauma or hardship “which provides the lived experience for becoming effective practitioners”.²⁴³ Dr Holly Collinson-Randall’s work in this space makes it clear that “managers, coaches, and mentors with specific, intimate ‘postcode knowledge’ of the community” bring credibility to a programme and builds trust.²⁴⁴

239 Ibid

240 Commission on Young Lives, 2022. “Hidden in Plain Sight”

241 Mason, Walpole and Case, 2020. “A theory of change”

242 CSJ call for evidence, Dallaglio RugbyWorks.

243 Morgan and Parker, 2022. “Sport, physical activity and criminal justice: Politics, policy and practice”

244 Dr Holly Collinson-Randall, 2022. “Disrupting knife crime through sport”

Case study: English Football League

Premier League Kicks: EFL Club Community Organisations have been delivering Kicks since 2006. Kicks runs twice a week for 45 weeks of the year, providing regular engagement for young people from all backgrounds and abilities in football, sport and personal development – providing a trusted, positive influence in high-need areas.

Over 175,000 young people will have engaged in the programme between 2019-2022, all delivered by the community organisations associated with professional football clubs. One of the key elements for the success of Kicks is the workforce, with 20 per cent of the coaching and delivery staff being former participants, often hailing from the same area in which they are now working.

The workforce is highly dedicated and “motivated by a desire to help others or ‘give back’ to society”.²⁴⁵ In this way, the best coaches understand clearly, and often by way of experience, the issues affecting the local communities their young people live in and recognise how these issues impact on their lives and those of their families.²⁴⁶ In other words, they can be uniquely proximate – and therefore uniquely placed – to help young people turn their lives around.

“[Sport can provide] good influences by people who may have walked the same walk in their early years by sharing experience and wisdom with the youths.”

Safe and Sound Wellbeing Hub

Dallaglio RugbyWorks, a charity using rugby to engage children at risk of school exclusion, told us about their partnership with the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust. The trust trains sportspeople to be ‘athlete mentors’, working directly with young people to unlock their potential.

“Working with young people in this capacity has also empowered our coaches to build stable and trusted adult relationships with them. In our partnership with athletes from Dame Kelly Holmes Trust, we were also able to provide the young people with more athlete role models for them to look up to.”

Dallaglio RugbyWorks

For some young people, the bonds formed during sport take on a familial poignancy, standing in for the negative patterns of behaviour in their family of origin. A common narrative in the literature is the description of sports teams and groups as family-like structures. In one study, coaches were described as being almost like a “‘substitute’ or ‘surrogate’ father-figure, providing support and listening to the young person in a way they were unaccustomed to.”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Morgan and Parker, 2022. “Sport, physical activity and criminal justice: Politics, policy and practice”

²⁴⁶ Morgan et al, 2019. “Participation in sport as a mechanism to transform the lives of young people within the criminal justice system: an academic exploration of a theory of change”

²⁴⁷ Morgan, 2017. “Generating recognition, acceptance and social inclusion in marginalised youth populations: the potential of sports-based interventions”

This was consistent with what we heard in our call for evidence, as the following extracts demonstrate:

"I found peace in sport and had father figures within sport, great people who have long since gone, who I respected and took advice from, was taught respect, be law abiding."

Durham County Boxing Club

"I think that you build a family in football, and also in gang crime. You build a family in the gangs you get drawn into. But when you already have a strong family structure, in football for example, it's harder for other people to get to you, to draw you away into things like knife crime or gang crime, because you have such strong connections with that family that are there for you. It's protection."

Inaya, FBB Young Person

Building on a foundation of trust and stability allows skilled practitioners to help young people to reimagine a future for themselves, not in the image of what has gone before, but in the hope of what is to come:

"...Sports participation also helps to support young people to distance themselves from negative behaviour by providing them with mentors and role models. Many coaches and authority figures associated within the sports club can have a significant influence over the young person's actions. They can promote positive attitudes, build trust with the young person and also have the ability to teach the young person discipline. This will encourage the young person to be the best person of themselves."

Active Communities Surrey

3.3 How sports practitioners and policy can strengthen relationships to prevent crime

Recruiting, hiring and retaining the right staff for the job is mission critical. Without them, sports projects cannot hope to attract and engage the right young people. Time and again, throughout our evidence gathering, we heard about the importance of 'people power'.

"Experienced, dedicated coaches and staff – the activities delivered are by motivated, qualified, caring and compassionate individuals that want the best for the young people they are working with."

Active Communities Surrey

Nevertheless, the current delivery context is fraught. Organisations face difficulties relating to hiring and retention, pay and conditions and the wide-ranging skillset required to work competently with this at-risk cohort. We outline these issues in more detail below.

Recruitment and retention in this sector can be challenging. Many of the organisations we spoke to, or received evidence from, expressed concerns about low pay and antisocial hours. After-school sessions, for example, can run into the evening and detached youth workers and those doing street-based work are responsive to the needs of young people, meeting them in places and times that may not align with a standard 9am to 5pm work pattern.

"Staff retention is hugely impacted by the combination of poor pay and anti-social hours."

English Football League

Further, in some cases, coaches or session leaders are unpaid, giving their time as volunteers. For **New College Leicester**, "an ageing voluntary workforce ... run [the] majority of clubs" and a "limited supply of new volunteers to run opportunities" posed the biggest challenge to their after-school provision.

Finally, the operating environment is fast-paced and complex, requiring coaches and leaders to be up to date with not only the latest safeguarding duties but also understanding how gangs and criminal enterprises are changing and developing.

"In addition, it is challenging for staff to keep abreast of the latest trends in criminal activity such as the progression of grooming tactics by gangs, and the fast-moving development of useful information such as trauma-informed approaches."

English Football League

Alongside working conditions, staff also need to have the skills to do the job. They do far more than simply "acting as source of inspiration and encouragement for people to remain active".²⁴⁸ Rather, they have the power to transform young lives. Tellingly, none of the responses to our call for evidence referred to technical or sporting qualifications. Instead, the emphasis was squarely on the personal skills and attributes necessary to create safe environments and build trusted relationships from which to engage with, and support, at-risk youth. As **Downed Boxing** put it: "coach the person not the athlete". The exception to this was safeguarding, which most organisations considered to be paramount.

A wide array of person-specific and interpersonal skills and character traits emerged as key elements for this type of work. These are listed in the table below, along with quotes.

248 DCMS, 2023. "Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity"

Table 3: Most frequently cited personal skills for coaching at-risk youth

SKILL	QUOTE
Credible & good listener	<i>"We have learnt that to be successful agents of change, they must possess three crucial talents – credibility among young people, listening skills and the ability to build a trusted relationship."</i> Empire Fighting Chance
Relatable & non-judgmental	<i>"Good sports coaches who are relatable and will not judge the young people about their current status in life. People who will see the bigger picture - see the young people for who [they] can be rather than who they currently are."</i> Woolwich Polytechnic
Able to build trusted relationships	<p><i>"Our coaches and therapists build trusted relationships with the young people they work with."</i> Empire Fighting Chance</p> <p><i>"You must develop trusting relationships with the young people you are engaging with. They need to be in a safe environment supported by those around them. Stability and safety will keep the young people coming back to sessions."</i> Achieve Thrive Flourish</p>
Positive attitude	<p><i>"Having a cheerful and enthusiastic attitude when interacting with young people – the young people need to feel comfortable and trust the coaches to be able to engage with any activity freely."</i> Dallaglio</p> <p><i>"Listening to them, total respect for the person, create a supportive surrounding ... it all boils down to enthusiastic adults, who are prepared to get out there and get these kids involved..."</i> Durham County Boxing Club</p>

Case study: English Football League – Trusted Adult role

Our CCO network has developed a broad base of staff expertise to be able to support young people in what becomes a "Trusted Adult" role. This has evolved from a focus on sports coaches to those with expertise in the public and criminal justice sector, teachers, social and youth work and those with lived experience of either a victim or perpetrator of youth crime. Integral to this is staff's ability to understand and differentiate between young people's needs and take a trauma-informed approach to those who have experienced episodes in their lives which affect their emotional well-being and behaviour."

Case study: Premier League and National Youth Agency

The National Youth Agency Academy was created with the aim of offering access to youth work qualifications to build and upskill the youth workforce. Since 2020, the Premier League has encouraged Premier League Football Clubs to sign up to the Level 2 Award and Level 3 Diploma courses to gain qualifications, develop their youth work skills and knowledge to ultimately improve their youth work practice with the young people they engage with.

Since 2020, 230 coaches have completed a Level 2 or Level 3 qualification with 60 more learners starting in November 2023. The Level 2 Award youth work qualification gives learners a basic level of knowledge regarding:

- young people's development exploring adolescence;
- the theory of youth work outlining practice principles and the National Occupational Standards;
- safeguarding - to ensure youth work is delivered in a safe way for both practitioner and young person and that early signs of need can be spotted; and
- engaging and communicating with young people to support professional boundaries and to understand different ways of communication.

Through knowledge, discussion and practice, practitioners learn more about their own assumptions, how they engage with young people and how to improve their practice. Additionally, learners gain understanding of the youth work profession and the added value they bring to community development and multi-agency teams. In particular they will gain an understanding of the contextual factors around a young person and the wider network of support and opportunities available to meet the young person's holistic needs and interests.

The National Youth Agency as the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body for youth work in England, hopes to encourage the growth of the youth workforce so that every young person can access great youth work and a professionally qualified youth worker wherever they live. Their target is 10,000 professionally qualified youth workers (JNC Level 6), 20,000 youth support workers (Level 3) and 40,000 trained volunteers by 2032.

Given the enormous importance of staffing projects with the right people, we must ensure that existing youth work and coaching qualifications are fit for purpose. To that end, we recommend that the Government launch a review thereof, examining, in particular:

- how sport coaching qualifications could benefit from youth work components especially when working with at-risk children and young people;
- contextual safeguarding;
- child-first coaching principles which put the person before the player; and
- qualification routes including apprenticeships which offer non-traditional pathways into employment and the opportunity to 'earn while you learn'.

Recommendation 7

The Government should launch a review into existing coaching qualifications to ensure they are fit for purpose, including examining how youth work qualifications could aid sports coaches supporting at-risk children and young people and vice versa.

While the right people are paramount, so too are the right partnerships. Sport is not a panacea, and, oftentimes, problems that are unaddressed at home can hamper efforts to help through sport – for example through non-attendance.

“Another challenging aspect is irregular attendance and inconsistent levels of engagement with the programme. Low attendance in sessions brings down the energy of the group and often leads to learning losses. Partner services also reported that sometimes parents too were disengaged and didn’t enforce children to attend school or other activities regularly.”

Dallaglio RugbyWorks

Joining up the dots between sports interventions, the wider family and local services can help to support a young person on all fronts. Many of the organisations we spoke to also were also connected with statutory services in their area, in some cases through simple signposting, in others, through formal referral mechanisms. Whatever the arrangement, partnership working was felt to be an important element of best practice.

“Collaboration and multi-agency working where appropriate - YJB, Police, LA department, schools, voluntary sector including specialist and youth providers sports & leisure clubs through to sports NGB’s.”

Anonymous

One way to help catalyse this way of working is through family hubs. Family hubs are centres which, as part of integrated family services, ensure families with children and young people aged 0-19 receive early help to overcome a range of difficulties and build stronger relationships. At their most effective, family hubs act as a central point of access to services and support, connecting to other organisations and delivery sites including, in particular, the voluntary sector and wider community.²⁴⁹

In order that grassroots sports clubs should continue to work with – and reach – those children in need, we recommend that family hubs proactively engage with grassroots sport clubs, charities and organisations in their local area, signposting families at the earliest opportunity and before concerns escalate.

Sports clubs and charities, in turn, should be supported to refer into family hubs when working with young people whose home life or circumstances may warrant further support or investigation. This would help to ensure a holistic approach to tackling the underlying drivers of youth offending, addressing difficulties on and off the pitch.

249 Family Hubs Network. [“Introducing Family Hubs”](#)

Recommendation 8

The Government should update statutory guidance to ensure that all Family Hubs have access to, and make use of, a comprehensive list of local sports organisations in their area. The guidance should, further, detail how they can make best use of connecting and convening power to improve collaborative working and strategy alignment between local sports organisations and other service providers—in particular with a view to reducing the risk of young people becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. This should enable referral in both directions; from sports to family hubs and vice versa.

chapter four

How sport can reduce crime by making neighbourhoods safer

4.1 Relationship to crime: growing up on unsafe streets is a clear risk factor for crime

Committing violence, being on the receiving end of it, or feeling unsafe, are all risk factors for violent activity. To put it another way, violence – and fear of it – breeds violence.

Bullying, for example, is associated with an increased risk of violence. A longitudinal study in Edinburgh has found that individuals perpetrating bullying between ages 13 and 16 are significantly more likely to report being violent at age 17.²⁵⁰ Bullying at age 14, meanwhile, has been found to predict, among other things, violent convictions between ages 15 and 20, self-reported violence at ages 15 to 18, and drug use at ages 27 to 32.²⁵¹

According to Home Office analysis of data drawn from the E-Risk Longitudinal Study and the Millenium Cohort Study exploring serious violence linked behaviours (SVLBs), children who had previously been involved in minor violence (pushing, shoving or hitting someone) had over twice the odds of engaging in SVLBs than those who have not been involved in minor violence.²⁵² E-Risk analysis also found that minor violence and stealing reported at age 12 were indicators of SVLBs reported at age 18.²⁵³

It should also be noted that, for both perpetrators and victims, their own experiences of violence and victimisation are often connected. In analysis of data from the Millenium Cohort Study, self-reported experiences of victimisation were a significant indicator of weapon carrying/use as well as self-harm and isolation.²⁵⁴ 81.3 per cent of weapon carriers/users reported being victimised, compared with 48.8 per cent of non-carriers/users.²⁵⁵ Additionally, 41.4 per cent of weapon carriers/users reported self-harming, whereas only 14.6 per cent of non-carriers/users reported self-harming.²⁵⁶

250 McVie, 2014. "The Impact of Bullying Perpetration and Victimization on Later Violence and Psychological Distress"

251 Farrington & Ttofi, 2011. "Bullying as a predictor of offending, violence and later life outcomes"

252 Home Office, 2019. "An analysis of indicators of serious violence: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study and the Environmental Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Twin Study"

253 Ibid

254 Ibid

255 Ibid

256 Ibid

Table 4: Weapon carrying/use by victimisation

	NON-WEAPON CARRIERS/USERS % (UNWEIGHTED BASE N=10,707)	WEAPON CARRIERS/USERS % (UNWEIGHTED BASE N=317)
Insulted, called names, threatened or shouted at*	42.6%	72.5%
Experienced physical violence (pushed, shoved, hit, slapped, punched)*	21.8%	62.1%
Hit with or had a weapon used against them*	2.5%	30.9%
Had something stolen*	7.1%	26.4%
Had an unwelcome sexual approach or been sexually assaulted*	2.5%	11.9%

Notes:

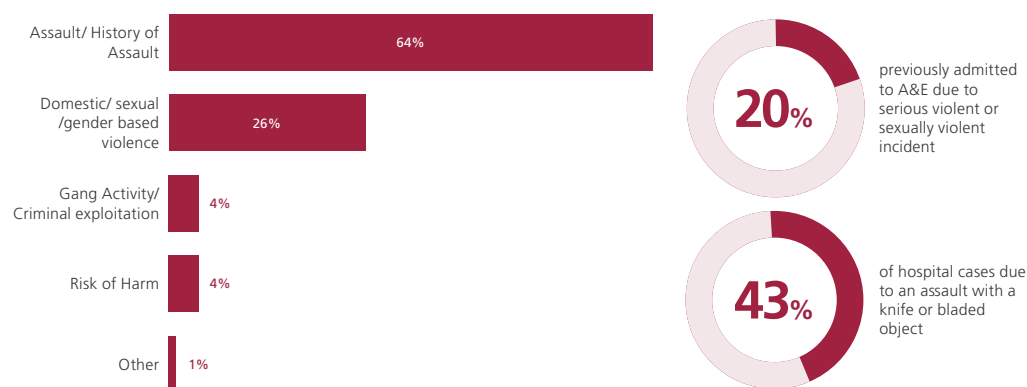
- Missing cases were excluded when calculating the percentages and significance tests.
- * indicates significance at 5% level.
- See Appendix E for % of group carrying/using a weapon and unweighted bases.

Source: Home Office

Analysis by Crest of data relating to a group of young offenders from a London Youth Offending Team revealed that just under half of the young people (n=20) had experienced, or were at risk of harm, outside their family. 14 had indicators of criminal exploitation or county lines concerns, four had indicators of gang or sexual related exploitation and five had indicators of sexual exploitation.²⁵⁷

Similar dynamics are at play for victims of violence. Using data on 479 young people treated in hospital for a serious violent incident and referred to Redthread (a youth charity that supports children at risk of violence including through hospital-based youth work) the key reason for referral was for assault/history of assault (64 per cent).²⁵⁸

Figure 13: Reason for referral to Redthread



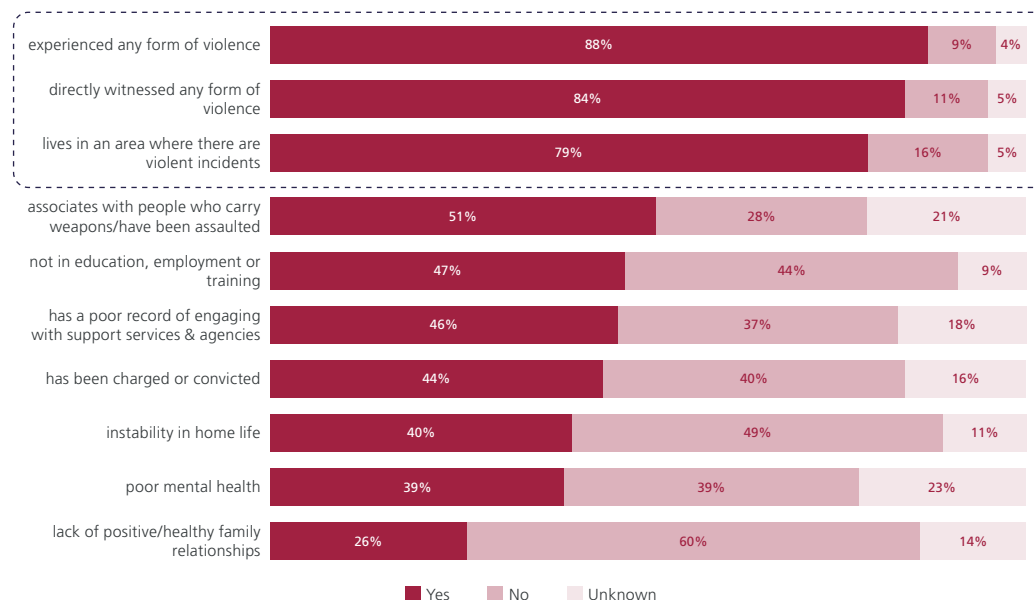
Source: Redthread

257 Crest, 2021. "Violence and vulnerability"

258 Ibid

Additional data for 57 young people revealed that they had previous exposure to high levels of violence: 97 per cent reported witnessing or experiencing violence, 23 per cent had previously been admitted to A&E for an injury related to abuse or violence and 66 per cent were known to official agencies at the time of admission.

Figure 14: Top risk factors related to violence



Source: Crest analysis of Redthread data

Finally, feeling unsafe in your local area is also related to violence. According to Home Office analysis of indicators of serious violence, a young person's perceived safety of the local area was a significant indicator of weapon carrying/use.²⁵⁹ Children who reported not feeling safe where they lived were 2.06 times more likely to self-report carrying/using a weapon compared to children that lived in an area where they felt safe.²⁶⁰

Qualitative research conducted for this report revealed that, in general, young people are less safe than ever before. Practitioners highlighted a myriad of threats including child sexual and criminal exploitation, county lines grooming, the normalisation of illicit drug-taking, antisocial behaviour and increasing peer-on-peer violence.

"Recruitment into county lines, drug and violent related criminality."

Downend Boxing

While these threats exist in and of themselves, they are also fluid. They affect how young people move around places, impacting on their ability to do so freely and without fear.

"Some participants expressed the challenge of safety. Freedom to walk or travel locally can come with fear...."

Achieve Thrive Flourish

²⁵⁹ Home Office, 2019. "An analysis of indicators of serious violence: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study and the Environmental Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Twin Study"

²⁶⁰ Ibid

Young people may feel an increasing sense of dislocation from the spaces and communities that they live, work, move and play in. The attitudes of adults too, adds another layer of complexity. As **Pennine Oaks** put it, *"if a group of young people find an area to kick a ball about or just a get together, fingers are instantly pointed at them for congregating and causing nuisance."* This serves as a reminder that, at the same time that young people are struggling to access the physical infrastructure for play and physical activity, even the places that are available are often hostile.

This theme of place, space and movement was also highlighted at our roundtable with criminal justice experienced young people. They talked about the difficulties they encountered in trying avoid certain areas where "all the bad boys are from". Even when they did manage to steer clear of no-go areas, there was always the risk that trouble would find them.

"If you choose not to be there you can still be a victim can't you? Yeah. The people that have got problems with your block, they don't care that you're not involved."

Anon, lived experience roundtable

4.2 Why sport works: sport enriches the community by fostering a sense of belonging

We shouldn't be surprised that a lack of safety in the community is linked to crime. After all, there is a deeply felt human need to belong. Naturally, we turn to our local communities to fulfil this longing. Absent strong positive relationships, young people can be inclined to seek out belonging elsewhere --- even if this involves turning to criminal network.

A 2018 report by the CSJ expressed it thus: *"Whilst the majority of the population looks for status and wealth through progression in legitimate employment and finds their identity and a sense of belonging through their family, young people from dysfunctional families who live in deprived areas of high unemployment, crime and violence and who are marginalised from mainstream society can potentially find it through the gang."*²⁶¹

Recalling the first element of Travis Hirschi's social bond theory helps to explain one of the ways in which sport can work to prevent youth crime, namely attachment to peers. He believed that *"the absence of inhibition or the lack of strong positive relationships and the presence of weak social bonding, especially to school, facilitates engagement in various forms of antisocial behaviours."*²⁶² For young people at risk of engaging in criminal activity, the opportunity to create new bonds of friendship with positive peer groups through sport can act against weak – or negative – bonds that would pull them in the opposite direction.

The importance of this social bond, or connection, came through strongly in our call for evidence. Prosocial (as opposed to negative or risky) relationships cultivated through sport can help boost the young person's self-esteem and confidence encouraging them to distract themselves from criminal activity.²⁶³ As the below charities put it:

261 Centre for Social Justice, 2009. *"Dying to belong: An in-depth review of street gangs in Britain"*

262 Carolyn Gentle-Genitty. *"Understanding Juvenile Delinquent Behavior through Social Bonding"*

263 Active Communities Surrey / CSJ Call for Evidence

“... Sport and physical activity has the power to provide a like-minded community and a sense of belonging for the young person which is one of the main reasons for their engagement in anti-social behaviour or crime. When young people engage in these behaviours, they join groups and gangs to fulfil this desire which they are not receiving from elsewhere. Sport and physical activity can have the same effect but in a much more positive way.”

Active Communities, Surrey



"We have seen friendships grow through our sporting activities which under normal circumstances would not have formed... Young people start to have a different outlook to life and renewed belief system."

Pennine Oaks

Belonging, alongside security and connection, make up the three pillars that enable local communities, and people, to thrive.²⁶⁴ As we have heard in our previous research in this area, gangs, for example, provide the belonging, loyalty and 'unconditional love' that many young people are not finding at home. Participation in formal and non-formal teams and activities can help to create strong bonds and positive networks which protect against criminality by cultivating a stronger sense of belonging.

"Young people accessing sport also helps to provide them with a sense of belonging and community. Whether young people are participating in formal team set ups or in a non-formal setting, participation supports young people to form strong bonds with teammates and coaches and are therefore less likely to engage in criminal or antisocial behaviour due to their connection to a positive and supportive social network. Alongside this, sport also provides an opportunity for young people to expand their social network, develop new long-lasting friendships and increase the social mix of their social circle."

English Football League

As children become more involved in their sports team or club, they may also begin to feel like part of a team, a community, and a growing sense of responsibility not just for their teammates but also for themselves.²⁶⁵ This growing sense of personal responsibility and working towards a shared goal helps strengthen bonds which, in turn, can diminish the pull of negative influences. It can also act as a form of social inclusion.

"Within the gym the young person may see an alternative to negative street influences, and has contact with others who are striving to the same goals. This allows them to move away from a poor peer group and low aspirations to a positive and supportive mindset."

Downend Boxing

As well as offering opportunities to engage with a new set of peers and to establish positive friendship, sport can also offer young people a safe place to go.

"The activities can provide the young people with a safe space to hang out and also provide them with some values about life - respect, confidence, self-esteem, how to win and lose."

Active Leeds

²⁶⁴ Centre for Social Justice, 2021. ["Pillars of Community"](#)

²⁶⁵ CSJ Call for Evidence, Newcastle Blue Star FC.

In a world increasingly perceived as hostile, having place to go where a young person feels safe, is paramount. A 2020 study by Dr Holly Collinson-Randall of the University of Loughborough exploring the role of sport-based interventions on tackling knife crime emphasised the importance of a safe space where young people can engage with a programme “separated from the driving factors that might encourage them toward knife crime.”²⁶⁶

On a site visit to a BoxWise gym in Manchester, the manager, who was also the governor of the adjacent prison, Strangeways, described the uniqueness of their set up, where enemies on the outside can train as friends on the inside:

“Our gym is postcode neutral... Boxing gyms are the only place you can have a prison officer, doctor, student and a criminal all training under the roof, with the same goals and focus, working to get the best out of one another”.

Fox Amateur Boxing Club

This was a point that was reiterated by a young person at our criminal-justice experienced roundtable. They described how, when they were at the boxing gym, they left behind the negativity of the outside, respecting the safety of the gym which provided protection from the harsh reality of their everyday experience.

“... being here [in the boxing gym], I couldn't bring friends that were doing the other stuff you know what I'm saying? Me being here I can be safe if something happens ... last week one of my friends got stabbed, innit? I saw the actual shiv.”

Anon, lived experience roundtable

And it's not just the young people who benefit. Parents too, are afforded some respite, albeit temporary, knowing that their child is safe and supervised, channelling their energies into something positive instead.

“Participating in such extra-curricular activities also provided families with a sense of security as to the whereabouts of their children, and as providing a distraction from engaging in more dangerous activities such as running county lines or perpetrating violent and serious crimes.”

Dallaglio RugbyWorks

Many of the young people we spoke to described, in no uncertain terms, the ‘escape’ sport offered them, not just from life on ‘the roads’ but from challenging home environments as well.

266 Dr Holly Collinson-Randall, 2022. [“Disrupting knife crime through sport”](#)

"All your problems disappear when you play football or any sport I feel when you're in that element of training or practice. You're not running thinking 'oh is there food at home?' you're not really thinking any problems. It's literally a safe space. So for me I feel like when I go to football football for me is my getaway. It's my get away from the noise I have to face."

Anon, lived experience roundtable

The literature suggests that, for under-16s, the most dangerous time of day is after school, between 4 and 6pm, when they are most likely to be a victim of knife crime.²⁶⁷ Approximately half of under-16 stabbings occur during this window.²⁶⁸ Providing targeted sports activities at times of heightened risk can help to prevent such crimes from occurring.

Idris Elba, founder of Don't Stab Your Future put it this way *"From the time young people leave school, until the time they're at home with family, there is often a void, a dangerous spike of nothing to do, where nothing can easily turn to something dangerous. If there continues to be no options for this after-school period, we will always see gangs form. Let's create options for these young people."*²⁶⁹

Responses to our call for evidence also noted that particular times of day are more dangerous for young people than others and that providing alternative activities like sport during those peak times can help to reduce youth crime and antisocial behaviour in local areas.

"We observed that young people are most at risk of being victims of or participating in criminal behaviour in the hours after-school. Providing them with activities in this critical time provides them with an alternate group of peers that can function as a wider support network. Our partner services provided an example of daily night football sessions at a youth centre in Leicester, where young people were provided with free-of-cost football coaching sessions at night, between 8 and 11 pm. In the period that the programme was active, the locality saw a fall in crime rates, and fewer young people were groomed to join gangs."

Dallaglio RugbyWorks

A review of the evidence by the Youth Endowment Fund suggests that 'hot spots policing' can be an effective way to tackle youth crime. This approach "identifies locations where crime is most concentrated and focuses policing resources and activities on them."²⁷⁰ On average, hot spots policing has reduced violent crime by 14 per cent, drug offences by 30 per cent and overall offending by 17 per cent.²⁷¹ In Southend-on-Sea, Operation Ark saw violent crime fall by 74 per cent in the 20 highest crime hot spots on days when patrols took place.²⁷² Some innovative organisations are capitalising on this approach and deploying sports-based interventions in crime hot spots.

267 The British Medical Journal, 2018. "Under 16s are at highest risk of being stabbed going home from school, UK study finds"

268 Ibid

269 Arsenal Digital, 2022. "Arsenal and Adidas: No More Red"

270 Youth Endowment Fund. "Hotspots policing"

271 Ibid

272 Ibid

Case study: Sunderland Community Action Group

We have developed a new cycling intervention in the North of Sunderland named “Night riders”. This activity targets young people in known ASB hotspots and as the name suggests this activity only takes place on evenings when ASB is at its highest.

We target young people via Detached youth workers, and once a relationship is set up we transport young people away from those hotspot areas via our minibus to our cycling and sports Hub where they will access a group led cycling experience. The aim is to reduce pressure on front-line services and the local community as a whole. The cycles and helmets are covered in LED lights making it for a high visual positive fun experience for everyone taking part.

This is a low cost-effective way of utilising bikes that would be normally be locked away in a container at night and not getting used into an fun effective organised activity that young people want to take part in.

Case Study: New College Leicester

Timing is crucial. There are certain periods of time when young people are at their most vulnerable if they don’t have anything to do. The flip side of this is once you address that you need to consider what happens either side of your provision. An example of this is a very successful Friday evening basketball session which was hosted by the Leicester Riders here at New College Leicester that created problems at kicking out time (9pm). The quick win was to enlist the support of the local police community support officer who was quick to identify the young people causing concern. These young people where then issued an ultimatum of behave or don’t come to the sessions.

4.3 How sports practitioners and policy can capitalise on existing community assets to create safe neighbourhoods

For both the young person and the delivery organisation, setting up and running a safe space for sport and physical activity is not without its challenges. Young people need – and deserve – access to high quality sports facilities. Responses to our call for evidence made it clear that there simply aren’t enough high-quality facilities available and that finding good locations, especially for indoor sport during the winter, can be difficult. For many, the facility costs are growing, making sourcing high quality places more difficult, a problem that has been exacerbated by the energy crisis.

Case Study: Lawn Tennis Association

45 per cent of park tennis courts are categorised as being in poor, very poor, or unplayable condition. This may mean that to play tennis you have to travel out of your local area to find a playable court.

Park tennis venues are particularly important for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as being the most popular venue for women to play after they have left education.

The LTA is currently working with the UK Government to deliver £30m of investment to bring back to life these park tennis courts for underserved communities across Great Britain. This project is particularly important for people from lower-socioeconomic groups and women, as the most popular venue for women to play tennis after they have left education.

In addition to traditional facilities such as tennis courts and leisure centres, young people also need access to more informal spaces which like their traditional counterparts, can be hard to come by.

"The young people that are at risk are those that are more comfortable in a less formal environment like a youth club where they can have a kick about if they want or if not, they can sit and chill with their mates. Again, with the limited public sector resources available the Youth Service Provision in Leicester is non-existent. Many voluntary organisations are trying to fill that gap. It would be very interesting to see how many of our professional footballers have grown up learning their trade in the informal ball cages across the country."

New College Leicester

"Young people require both formal and informal opportunities to play sport: formal opportunities with adult supervision and rules provides safe places, whereas informal opportunities allow young people to participate at the times which suit them..."

English Football League

Careful consideration also needs to be paid to where facilities are located. They must be easily and safely accessed by young people. School facilities, for example, are often not available outside of school hours or require income charges making it difficult for community groups to pay for. Others are built outside of city centre locations which create issues either of using public transport and parental concern over safety of this, or the reliance on parents to drop children off.

In underserved communities, people may find it difficult to *"travel outside their immediate locality and for children and young people this is typically about one mile or less. This is for a number of reasons including: cultural traditions; access to and cost of transport; and, in some cases the fear of being a victim of crime."* **Lawn Tennis Association**

Ideally, according to the **English Football League**, there ought to be “quality facilities in locations which young people can access, affordable for community groups to hire and available for informal use at other times.” The need for adequate facilities was reiterated by one of the young people we spoke to, **Inaya** from **Football Beyond Borders** who said:

“As much as I do love football, a problem I’ve found is accessibility. When you’re younger you’ll play anywhere, but when you get older you don’t want to fall down on concrete. So you don’t want to play in the cages anymore, and yes there is an astro but that’s run on a temporary basis so you can only play at specific times. It’s also not accessible financially, and this is a big thing for girls playing football as well, because for a lot of families football is not seen as a priority for girls and might not fund girls playing football.”

Finally, responses to our call for evidence indicated that, in general, young people have fewer places to go and that places where young people have traditionally gathered are disappearing.

“Increasingly young people have moved away from parks and public spaces, particularly in urban areas and even more so in underserved areas. This is due to a number of factors; gang culture, where gangs or groups of youths are prevalent, the fear of young people being approached, harassed, or potentially attacked is an everyday fear”.

Achieve Thrive Flourish

One of the most obvious ways to overcome the place-based challenges outlined above is to make better use of existing facilities that are already located in places where children are almost universally guaranteed to be: school. Approximately 49 per cent of grass pitches and 76 per cent of sports halls in England are located on school sites.²⁷³

Since 2019, the Government has invested £67.6m in supporting schools to unlock their sports facilities to support greater links with the local community and to promote more physical activity through its Opening School Facilities (OSF) Programme.

The latest tranche of £57m, announced in March 2023, was awarded to a consortium including Active Partnerships, StreetGames, ukactive and the Youth Sports Trust to ensure that “opportunities to be physically active are focused in areas of high inequalities, particularly among women and girls, disadvantaged and culturally diverse communities, and those with special educational needs, disabilities, or long-term health conditions.”²⁷⁴ The three year investment will be allocated by all 43 Active Partnerships across England and aims to engage with 1,350 schools during the life of the programme.²⁷⁵

We recommend that the consortium prioritise applications from schools in areas with the highest levels of youth violence. The Government should conduct an impact analysis to understand the impact of the OSF programme on crime rates in local areas.

²⁷³ House of Lords, 2021. “National Plan for Sport and Recreation Committee”

²⁷⁴ StreetGames, 2023. “Up to £57m investment received for schools to open their sports facilities to support communities to be more active”

²⁷⁵ *ibid*

Recommendation 9

The Opening School Facilities funding should prioritise applications from schools in areas with the highest levels of youth violence.

As we saw in Chapter One, independent schools hold a large amount of sporting stock.

While the Government has provided guidance on how schools can collaborate, little attention has been paid to sport and facilities in particular. Current guidance from the Department for Education is limited to the following areas: teaching, curriculum, leadership, targeted activities, becoming an academy sponsor, setting up a new free school and opening a maths school.²⁷⁶ Sport and physical activity is conspicuous by its absence. We recommend that facilities sharing for sport and physical activity be added to this list and that government issue fresh guidance and best practice on how best to achieve this. While sharing facilities is not a panacea, and the distribution of independent school does not align perfectly with areas of high deprivation (the majority of independent schools are located in South-East and London), it is, nonetheless, one way to level the playing field.

Recommendation 10

The Department for Education should update statutory guidance on setting up partnerships to include sharing of facilities for sports and physical activity between the independent and state education sectors.

Further, one of the ways that independent schools with charitable status can meet the public benefit test is through sharing facilities with local state schools. In 2015, in response to concerns expressed in Parliament that too few sports and arts facilities owned by charitable independent schools are accessible to students in state education, the Charity Commission updated its guidance for fee-charging educational charities, including charitable independent schools to read as follows: “The guidance has always made it clear that sharing facilities with local state schools is one way in which trustees of charitable independent schools can fulfil their public benefit duty by making provision for the poor to benefit. The updated guidance now encourages trustees of charitable schools, as a matter of good practice, to comment on their individual approaches to public benefit in sports, drama, music and other arts in their trustee annual report.”²⁷⁷ We do not believe that the guidance goes far enough.

²⁷⁶ Department for Education, 2022. [“Guide to setting up partnerships”](#)

²⁷⁷ House of Commons Library, 2023. [“Charitable status and independent schools”](#)

Recommendation 11

The Charity Commission currently sets the bar for independent schools meeting their public benefit test. The Government should intervene to make sharing of sports facilities a mandatory minimum baseline for meeting this test, subject to individual schools' assets and resources.

While prevention is undoubtably better than cure, including through greater access to sporting opportunities using existing assets such as school facilities, we must also consider what how sport can be deployed to create safer streets and reduce reoffending once a young person is known to, or has come into contact with, the criminal justice system. Baroness Sater, a former magistrate and long-standing supporter of sport-based policy, has lamented the lack of referral pathways into diversionary sport:

*"As a youth magistrate and a board member of the Youth Justice Board, I saw how sport can transform young lives. As a magistrate, I often wished that there were more options to send children to relevant and safe community sports clubs and programmes that would really help them and help to deal with the issues they faced with their offending. Finding that club, organisation or activity to which they could relate made a huge difference, and there are some great initiatives and organisations providing excellent opportunities."*²⁷⁸

Efforts are already being made to join up thinking in this space, in particular through the £5m Youth Justice Sport Fund (YJSF).²⁷⁹ This early intervention grant fund provided funding for voluntary and community sector organisations to carry out targeted sports-based work to support children considered to be vulnerable to crime. A consortium of partners made up of StreetGames, Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice and the Sport for Development Coalition worked in close partnership with the MOJ to deliver capacity-building activity, working with successful organisations to build and improve links between the sport for crime prevention sector and youth justice agencies.²⁸⁰

The aims were twofold: (i) to support vulnerable young people, aged 10-17, at-risk of involvement in crime, anti-social behaviour and serious violence through involvement in local sporting activities; and (ii) to increase the capability of sport sector delivery organisations to work effectively with their local criminal justice partners, including Youth Offending Teams, Police and Police Crime Commissioners (PCC)/Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) structures.²⁸¹

More than 400 projects submitted an application for funding and, in total, 220 projects were successful, with delivery taking place between January and March 2023. In total, 7,832 young people took part, with 68,741 attendances over the 12-week period and an average of nine session attended per person.²⁸² 82 per cent of participants came from the bottom IMD deciles.

²⁷⁸ House of Lords Debate, 2018. "Sport, Recreation and the Arts - Motion to Take Note"

²⁷⁹ Ministry of Justice, 2023. "Youth Justice Sport Fund"

²⁸⁰ Ibid

²⁸¹ Ibid

²⁸² Dr Mason et al, 2023. "Youth Justice Sport Fund External Evaluation Report".

The reach and level of engagement is considerable, given the tight lead time and short delivery period. The consortium approach allowed delivery organisations to mobilise quickly, reaching those most in need and was guided by a national steering group. Consideration should be given to how such an approach could be replicated in future.

We welcome the Government's invitation to academics and practitioners to join together to share their experiences of the role sport plays in community safety and criminal justice, and believe that the APPG for Sport and Physical Activity in the Criminal Justice System would be well placed to play a key role in this regard.²⁸³ Building on the success of the YJSF, the APPG for Sport and Physical Activity in the Criminal Justice System should carry out a review into how all criminal justice commissioners are using sport to create safer communities across England and Wales, making recommendations for how justice commissioners can work most effectively with voluntary, community and third sector organisations supporting at-risk groups.

Recommendation 12

The APPG for Sport and Physical Activity in the Criminal Justice System should carry out a review into how all criminal justice commissioners are using sport to create safer communities across England and Wales and make recommendations for strengthening and embedding collaborative working in future.

In addition to increasing partnership working between youth justice and community sport, sport can also be used to great effect in prison to support behaviour change and lower the risk of reoffending. In 2018, Professor Rosie Meeks published her review into sport in prison, concluding that provision remains patchy and underdeveloped.²⁸⁴

At the time of writing, 42 per cent of children reoffended within a year of release from prison.²⁸⁵ In contrast, many of the organisations supporting people in prison through sport reported significantly better results as demonstrated in the table below.²⁸⁶

Table 5: Sports-based resettlement programmes in prisons in England report reoffending data of...

6 per cent	The Chelsea FC and RFU rugby academies at HMP & YOI Portland (18-21 year olds)
7 per cent	The Street Soccer programme at HMP Forest Bank (18-21 year olds and adults)
13 per cent	The Airborne Initiative (outward bound programme for 18-21 year olds)
15 per cent	The Saracens rugby get onside programme at HMP & YOI Feltham (18-21 year olds)
17 per cent	The Fulham football club programme at HMP & YOI Feltham (18-21 year olds)
44 per cent	Urban Stars South Gloucestershire at HMYOI Ashfield (children under the age of 18)

283 DCMS, 2023. "Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity"

284 The Guardian, 2018. "How sport in prison could stop reoffending"

285 Ministry of Justice, 2018. "A sporting chance: An independent review of sport in youth and adult prisons"

286 Ibid

Case study: The Twinning Project²⁸⁷

The Twinning Project is a partnership between HM Prison and Probation Service and professional football clubs with the objective of twinning every prison in England and Wales with a local professional football club.

The aim is to engage approximately 48 people in prison per year in each of the 117 prisons in England and Wales in football-based programmes to improve their mental and physical health, wellbeing and obtain a qualification which will help improve their life chances and gain employment on release.

Professional coaches and football club staff, supported by prison PE officers co-deliver accredited coaching and employability-based qualifications to prisoners to better prepare them for life after their release.

How it works²⁸⁸

The Twinning Project is being delivered across the prison estate, by a range of football clubs with different budgets and different course structures. Nevertheless, common elements include:

- Physical Education Instructor (PEI) / gym staff and club staff work in partnership to deliver the programme
- Each session includes both educational workshops and playing sports
- Flexible delivery approach
- Recognition and celebration of achievements e.g. graduation ceremonies
- Recruitment is undertaken by the prison
- Participants access Twinning Project kit and are identifiable as participants

Through the gate support²⁸⁹

A range of through the gate support is offered including:

- Encouraging prisoners to get in touch with clubs on release
- Making links with local employers during delivery that could assist post release
- Hiring prisoners back
- Offering employment within clubs

Early evaluation indicates that the Twinning Project has had a positive effect on participants', particularly in the area of identity fusion. Identity fusion refers to the science of social cohesion where powerful prosocial changes in behaviour are rooted in tight-knit bonds to groups. In this case, participants felt a strong affinity to the project, and a weaker sense of affinity to other people in prison.²⁹⁰

287 The Twinning Project. "The Twinning Project"

288 Kay and Mason, 2019. "The Twinning Project: Examining the Power of Sport in Prisoner Rehabilitation"

289 Ibid

290 University of Oxford, HMPPS and Twinning Project, 2020. "Pilot Study: Report 2020"

Recommendation 13

The Government should commit to implementing, in full, the recommendations from the 2018 independent review of sport in justice including ensuring every secure environment has a physical activity strategy and encouraging more partnerships between prisons, community groups and sporting bodies.

Youth offenders' institutes have a key role to play in turning lives around behind bars, including through targeted use of sport and physical activity. The Government's new sport strategy, published this summer, makes this point clearly stating "Physical Education departments across the youth and adult estate effectively support both adults and children who have offended, engaging them in a variety of sports and physical activities to not just improve physical and mental health, but work to tackle health disparities and reduce re-offending."²⁹¹ Sadly, this is not always the case.

In July 2023, HM Inspectorate of Prison published a shocking report into the state of HMYOI Cookham Wood.²⁹² Outcomes for safety and purposeful activity were rated poor, with 228 weapons found in the six months prior to the inspection and 41 per cent of children locked in their cells during the school day.²⁹³

This simply isn't good enough, which is why the opening of the UK's first secure school in 2024 represents such a fantastic opportunity to do things differently and to tackle stubbornly high reoffending rates. According to the latest figures, 69 per cent of children in youth custody reoffend in the first year of release.²⁹⁴

Oasis Academies, which won a contract from the MoJ to open the UK's first secure school for young offenders, will house a maximum of 49 children and has been hailed as a "youth justice revolution".²⁹⁵ It will deliver a therapeutic model of care and education, with an emphasis on restoration.

This new regime offers a fresh opportunity to explore, and to better understand, how sport can be used to aid rehabilitation and reduce the chance of reoffending. As learnings emerge and models of best practice develop, these should be shared with the wider youth justice estate.

Recommendation 14

The Ministry of Justice should work with Oasis Restore to share emerging learnings and models of best practice, particularly relating to sport, with the wider youth estate with a view to replicating successful programmes in other parts of the youth estate.

291 DCMS, 2023. ["Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity"](#)

292 HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2023. ["HMYOI Cookham Wood"](#)

293 Ibid

294 Oasis. ["Oasis Restore: A Youth Justice Revolution"](#)

295 Ibid

Given the enormous potential of sport for good in the prison estate, greater attention must be paid to the physical activity levels of people in prison. Presently, individual physical activity levels are not recorded. We recommend that the MoJ publish data on the number of people in prison achieving the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines of 150 minutes or more of physical activity per week. This could be achieved through a national opt-in survey, similar to the Active Lives Survey, and piloted in a small number of prisons before being rolled out nationally. To support efforts in this area, physical activity should be added to the Prison Inspection Framework as a fifth element of the 'Health establishment test'.²⁹⁶

Recommendation 15

The Ministry of Justice should publish data on physical activity levels in prisons.

296 HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2023. "[Inspection Framework](#)"

chapter five

How sport can reduce crime through opening economic opportunities

5.1 Relationship to crime: the effects of crime are disproportionately felt by the most disadvantaged

The relationship between crime and poverty is complex. For the purposes of this report, we have chosen to focus on the relationship between material deprivation and vulnerability to crime, as victim or perpetrator.

According to the justice and crime research agency, Crest, an estimated 213,000 children in England are vulnerable to serious violence due to deprivation and neighbourhood crime.²⁹⁷ 40 per cent of these children live in just ten local authority areas: Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, Kingston upon Hull, Bristol, Bolton and Newcastle upon Tyne.²⁹⁸

A 2018 study from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime examining the Metropolitan Police Service's Gangs Matrix, meanwhile, concluded that people living in the most vulnerable wards (the top 10 per cent) were six times more likely to become victims of knife crime than those in the least vulnerable wards (bottom 10 per cent).²⁹⁹ Potential gang members, in turn, were eleven times more likely to live in the most vulnerable wards.³⁰⁰

Statistical modelling by the Greater London Authority has found that deprivation (living environment), area rates of risky health behaviour (indicated by rates of chlamydia), school policy (rates of suspensions), as well as employment among young people, can predict the Boroughs with the highest rates of victimisation of young people.³⁰¹

Without diminishing the importance of personal responsibility, many of the young people we spoke to highlighted the pressure surrounding money – to acquire it or the lack thereof – and how the same influenced their choices to get involved in crime. Oftentimes it was described in terms of a lack of meaningful alternatives.

²⁹⁷ Crest, 2021. ["Violence and vulnerability"](#)

²⁹⁸ Ibid

²⁹⁹ Ibid

³⁰⁰ Ibid

³⁰¹ Greater London Intelligence, 2021. ["Understanding serious violence among young people in London"](#)

"Poverty and social deprivation were seen by many young people as leading to violence, as well as feeling 'stuck' where they live, with few meaningful employment prospects ahead when they are older... Many young people, particularly in the North of England, felt social deprivation in their areas contributed to a lack of opportunities and despondency amongst young people. Without the possibility of decent jobs or pathways to get involved with volunteering or helping the community, youth violence was sometimes the inevitable alternative."

English Football League

"Within this area, there's such a high poverty rate. Some of these people might think that getting into crime, especially drugs and stealing, are the only way that they can provide for their families and get money 'cos some of them may feel like they don't have a chance to succeed in life because of their environment."

Payton, 15, Yorkshire, English Football League

Participants at our criminal-justice experienced roundtable, meanwhile, helped to humanise this problem. The young men were quick to point out that involvement in criminality is often needs-driven, not choice-based, and eschewed stereotypes of simply being a 'bad' person. In many cases, the same young people spoke movingly about the financial worries in the home that led to crime. When faced with the practical and emotional burden of poverty with no apparent means of escape, it is not hard to see why crime may feel like the only way out.

"I've always been a calm guy, but another reason why people turn to crime and everything like that is the money aspect... Having to see a single mum or your mother cry because of their bills...it makes you go a different type of way like 'ok, how can I help my mum... I'm a young boy how can I help my mum?' ... I wouldn't care about being bad... how can I help my mum... a very easy solution would be to turn to things like selling drugs or activities like that."

Anon, Lived experience roundtable

"I didn't wake up one day and say 'hey, I want to be a gang member'. Money. We need money. I was around certain people ... domino effect."

Anon, Lived experience roundtable

Many of the responses to our call for evidence made it clear that financial insecurity is a major concern for young people today, exacerbated by the cost of living crisis.

"The increasing cost of living crisis is having a significant effect on young people especially through challenges associated with employment opportunities and being able to succeed across the education system."

Active Communities Surrey

As the cost of living crisis bites, families are having to make tough choices regarding how to

spend what limited – if any – disposable income is left over. Extracurricular activities are seen as hard to justify when a family is only just surviving.

“Rising inflation and bills are having an impact on the poorest families. Parents and carers are having to make difficult decisions about where money is being spent, with cuts being made to budgets for things like extracurricular activities, transport, food, socialising, and cultural activities.”

Empire Fighting Chance

5.2 Why sport works: participating in sport can build character, cultivate life skills, and open doors to economic opportunities

Taking part in targeted sport and physical activity interventions can act directly on some of the pressures, and the despondency, articulated in the previous section. Unlike ‘regular’ sport or curriculum PE, sport for development charities and organisations work intentionally with this cohort to provide new and additional opportunities to develop skills that will serve them on, and off, the pitch.

Often described as the ‘sport plus’ model, sport is used as a “tool to help young people realise their potential, obtain training, as well as recognise the importance of the shared community bonds”.³⁰² Participants are connected to “social – and job – skills training and educational programmes, with the aim of helping them pathway away from antisocial behaviour and a potential career criminal.”³⁰³

As StreetGames, one of the UK’s leading sport for development charities, put it “it is vital that young people have opportunities to make positive choices and develop skills and behaviours that will enable them to make positive choices in the future. Facilitating access to other developmental opportunities is crucial to avoid falling into a trap where crime is seen as the ‘inevitable alternative’.”³⁰⁴

“Sports sessions offer more than just physical activity – the young person has the chance to build social relationships, personal development and builds on positive experiences.”

Active Communities Survey

Our call for evidence submissions elaborated in detail on the opportunities sports creates, including the acquisition of important life skills like discipline and hard work. We elaborate more on these skills in the table below.

302 John Martyn Chamberlain, 2013. “Sports-based intervention and the problem of youth offending: a diverse enough tool for a diverse society?”

303 Andrews and Andrews, 2003. “Life in a secure unit: the rehabilitation of young people through the use of Sport”, in Social Science and medicine 56: pp 531–550

304 Mason, Walpole and Case, 2020. “A theory of change”

Table 6: Key skills acquired through participation in sport

SKILL	QUOTE
Discipline	<p><i>"I think one really good thing sport has done for me is keep me focussed and disciplined. Growing up I was always playing football. At the same time I was always with the bad boys ... but with football I always just had that focus and that discipline. If something's going on here, if it's time for me to go training, I've left the man and go training..."</i> Anon, Lived experience roundtable</p> <p><i>"[Sport] give[s] focus, discipline and reasons beyond health/fitness such as skill acquisition and possible careers."</i> Boxwise</p> <p><i>"Sport kept me disciplined. I played football. I always wanted to be the best version of myself. So waking up early, going to the gym, running and all that stuff takes discipline. So I'd say in times when people was out there doing silly stuff I had to get my morning routine done before I even thought about getting involved in that silly stuff."</i> Anon, Lived experience roundtable</p>
Teamwork	<p><i>"At its best, participation in sport can develop leadership and teamwork skills, and install work ethic and discipline."</i> Lawn Tennis Association</p> <p><i>"Sports and physical activity also help build important life skills such as discipline, teamwork and communication."</i> Dallaglio RugbyWorks</p> <p><i>"[Sport] build[s] a platform to help develop life skills in young people... promoting the importance of teamwork, communication and friendship."</i> Newcastle Blue Star FC</p>

Sport can also give young people the chance to put skills, like the ones described above, into practice. For example, by working hard, attending sessions regularly, training and building discipline young people can set themselves, and work towards, achieving their goals. This could be winning their next match, beating a personal best or achieving changes to their physique.

"Being able to see how my body changed over time. And the more that I applied myself physically meant, the greater the results and that for me was phenomenal."

Anon, Lived experience roundtable

Taking part in a sport-based intervention can also help to foster a sense of purpose for a young person. Similar to goal setting but different, purpose encapsulates the idea that they have something meaningful to do, it is an internal sense of resolve and, in some measure, responsibility.

"If a young person has purpose outside of the streets, it is far more likely they will go on to further education/ work."

Fox Amateur Boxing Club

"[Sport] can eliminate a bit of fear because they know that they are on a positive path, which can minimise the risk of getting caught up in unnecessary drama. Also, there are positive things they are working towards so if drama comes their way, they will probably not entertain it."

Woolwich Polytechnic

In addition to developing life skills and providing purpose, the best sports charities help young people to convert (or at least support them in thinking about how to convert) these new-found skills into meaningful job opportunities.

"Through our work on the Kickstart programme as well as delivering sports-based projects in Youth Offenders Institutes, we have evidence to show that young people are also able to recognise that there are wider careers and volunteering opportunities within the sport sector which sit outside becoming an elite sports person. For young people who are passionate about sport, having an opportunity to work in the football industry in some capacity can be a huge motivator to divert them away from criminal behaviour."

English Football League

Case study: Boxwise

BoxWise, a charity running over 45 10-week boxing programmes for disadvantaged youth through England affiliated boxing gyms, does this extremely well.

Their holistic syllabus is specifically designed to help disadvantaged young people to develop the six core values of purpose, adaptability, imagination, discipline, emotional control and teamwork. Skills that young people need to succeed in life and in the workplace.

Throughout the programme, participants are encouraged to think about their next steps and Boxwise coaches lend support with CV writing, interview skills and qualification and training fees. Boxing is the hook, but staff are always thinking about the young person's future.

During our evidence gathering, Adam*, a recent Boxwise graduate, explained how the programme kept him on the straight and narrow – giving him a safe place to go and friends that have become family. He attends college during the day and trains at the gym five evenings a week. His dedication and talent have not gone unnoticed. Seeing his potential, Boxwise have supported him to volunteer at regional fights to gain work experience and are sponsoring him to do a Level 1 coaching qualification.



Case study: BoxUP Crime – employment opportunities

A BoxUp coach from our lived experience roundtable reflected on the employment opportunities on offer for young people supported by his organisation.

“A big thing is ... access to some sort of employment as well. Rishi, he’s making good money every month.... We’ve got about 14 other young people that are working in the gym ... and sometimes it’s crazy because there’s not even enough work for everyone else but ... we know that if they’re not getting money, like, someone else is going to show them a way of getting money. So that is like a key ingredient in this whole scenario.”

Another way to create meaningful employment opportunities through sport is via apprenticeships. One way that this has been achieved successfully is through coaching apprenticeships. Coach Core, for example, is an employment and education charity that uses community sport apprenticeships to target young adults not in employment, education or training (NEET) and have them not only change their own future pathways but also become a positive influence in communities that need sports provision most.³⁰⁵

Case study: Coach Core – the apprenticeship way

Through a 15-month sports apprenticeship programme, Coach Core helps young people access the skills, confidence and knowledge to unlock meaningful education and employment opportunities.

Their operating model is unique, working with socially minded employers and innovative training providers to develop apprenticeships for disadvantaged 16-24 year olds across the UK, many of whom have traditionally lacked opportunities and faced significant barriers to entry. Nearly half of their apprentices live in the most deprived areas of the UK, 1 in 3 are non-white British and 1 in 5 have a disability.

Since 2012, they’ve worked with over 250 employers helping 869 disadvantaged young people gain vital skills and qualifications. 78 per cent of their apprentices have successfully progressed into employment or further education.

³⁰⁵ Coach Core. “What We Do”.

Case study: Coach Core – participant journey

James Kilobo, a Level 3 apprentice at England Boxing, has a captivating journey that led him to pursue an apprenticeship.

Born in the Congo, James came to the UK as a refugee at the age of 9, facing the challenges of adapting to a new environment and building a new life. At the age of 17, James found himself in trouble and ended up in prison. It was during this time that he discovered boxing programs and realised their transformative power. Witnessing firsthand how boxing could positively impact individuals, James felt a strong desire to give back to his community and support young people who were on a similar path to his own troubled past.

Motivated by his personal experiences and the belief that he could make a difference, James sought out opportunities to contribute to his community. He discovered the apprenticeship at England Boxing through his involvement in a Clink to Club programme to help prisoners integrate into communities after release. The apprenticeship offered James a unique platform to develop his skills and knowledge in various areas. From learning how to plan large events to working independently and organising courses, he recognised that the apprenticeship would equip him with valuable transferable skills.

5.3 How sports practitioners and policy can open affordable and accessible opportunities for all

To reap the life-changing benefits of sport and physical activity, young people need to be able to afford to participate and be made aware of what's on offer. Too often we heard that activities were 'cost prohibitive'.³⁰⁶

"The area we are in is within 30% of the most economically deprived in England. Financial issues either from membership fees, transport costs and cost of living all play a part. At our boxing club we keep the fees very low, all staff are unpaid volunteers, allowing young people from all backgrounds and situations to participate."

Bodmin Boxing Club

There are multiple costs involved in taking part in sport and physical activity. In the first instance, young people have to be able to get there. For some, public transport is the only option, with bus, tram and rail fares needing to be weighed up.

"We also have the issue of transport as not all young people will have the bus/train fare and this means the young people are excluded from that activity."

Pennine Oaks

306 CSJ call for evidence, Newcastle Blue Star FC.

In addition to travel, kit and equipment must also be considered. Some sports, like tennis or cricket require rackets and bats, and, in some cases, enforce a strict dress code.

"With the rising cost of living, costly sports activities are not affordable for participants. It is important to remember that it isn't ever just the cost of a session, it is paying for a kit and transport too. The need for free activities is more important than ever."

Achieve Thrive Flourish

Finally, we have heard, and our earlier Chapter One has shown, that children living in more deprived areas have access to fewer high-quality facilities locally and may need to travel out of borough to reach them.

"...if they live in an area of high crime & deprivation there's limited access to free or low-cost sports activities as a lot of sporting clubs are out of reach for lots of young people and their families due to the high cost of equipment needed, joining & membership fees plus travel costs to activities if those clubs are outside of their own neighbourhoods."

Sunderland Community Action Group

And it's not just the young people that are feeling the pinch. Practitioners we spoke to, and responses we received to our call for evidence, made it clear that securing lasting funding is a key structural barrier to delivery. It remains a "massive financial challenge and that needs as much help as possible."³⁰⁷ Often, funding is often short-term and unreliable.

"Long-term interventions need longer-term funding to provide more far-reaching impacts."

Dallaglio RugbyWorks

As already alluded to, grassroots sports providers often fail to attract the same funding as larger organisations. A lack of secure funding creates the risk that provision will dry up leaving young people with even fewer choices.

"Funding is extremely hard to get hold of as it always goes to the big organisations who mainly only target one group."

Youth in Action Preston

Finally, lacking a secure and sustainable funding stream, providers are left to rely on grants and donations which hamper the ability to plan for the future.

307 CSJ Call for Evidence, Greater Manchester Football Club.

"We receive no funding from the government or local authorities to deliver our programmes, which are free of charge to the young people who come to our gym. We are reliant on grants, fundraising and sales to schools to maintain our interventions for vulnerable young people."

Empire Fighting Chance

In many cases, a lack of financial security didn't just negatively impact on the delivery organisation's bottom line. Instead, it also had a direct impact on engagement on live programmes.

"Having to continually apply for funding to help continue the programme becomes very hard in knowing whether it will be sustainable or not. This then has a negative effect on the young person as to their engagement especially if they know there may not be a chance of them being able to carry on at the club or activity. It would be more beneficial to know there was a constant funding pot for these types of interventions because of how successful they are. This has been evident in the levels of participation and feedback we have received throughout our projects."

Active Communities Surrey

"Longevity and security of funding enables both continuity of delivery and access for young people. Where funding is short term, we have seen that young people feel let down when sessions stop after a period of time – even up to a year. Lack of long-term funding also leads to change of staff where they have limited security of employment, and this then impacts upon young people's security of having a known and trusted adult in attendance where relationships have been built."

English Football League

One way to ensure that young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have an ongoing supply of high-quality sports and extracurricular opportunities would be for the Government to establish a Youth Infrastructure Endowment which harnesses the power of match funding to turbocharge an expanded government grant funding pot. As outlined earlier in this report, funding cuts of £959m since 2010 have drastically reduced provision of out of school youth services, leaving young people with less provision than ever before.

The Government should fully deliver its 2019 manifesto commitment to invest £500m in new youth clubs and services. Just £378m of the original £500m commitment has actually been allocated to youth facilities, with £22m going to the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and £121m to the National Citizens Service – neither of which is sports-focused or targeted at the most disadvantaged young people.³⁰⁸ And, as recently as March 2023, the Treasury clawed back an additional £31m citing the 'challenging financial climate'.³⁰⁹

308 CSJ analysis of figures.

309 Civil Society, 2023. "Youth Investment Fund cut by further £31m, DCMS confirms"

By our estimates that leaves £243m unspent. Using the £243m underspend, the next government should commit to a funding scheme of at least that amount to harness the power of match funding to double the impact of government spending on youth facilities and support. This should be developed on an endowment model, enabling a stock of capital to accumulate, and be reinvested over time. The next Government should do the same, committing the full amount of £500m originally promised.

This could be called the Youth Infrastructure Endowment, highlighting how it enables both the Government and philanthropists to leave a perpetual legacy for future generations. Funds should be made available for infrastructure (facilities) and revenue costs as suggested in the model highlighted in the Appendix. This should include youth clubs that offer sports-based interventions.

5.3.1 How philanthropic investment is already transforming the landscape

OnSide Youth Zones provide us with an excellent example of how high-quality youth provision can be sustainably delivered harnessing the power of match funding. OnSide Youth Zones are purpose built, state-of-the art, Youth Zones situated in the most deprived areas across the UK. They are designed to give young people aged 8–19 (or up to 25 for those with a disability), “somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to” – occupying their bodies and minds with engaging activities, helping them develop new skills and socialise in a safe, positive and accessible environment.

Each site is designed in conjunction with local community members and the young people, with a minimum of 20 activities available on any given night spanning sports, arts, crafts, music and informal ‘chill out’ spaces. On average 60 staff and 100 volunteers support over 3,000 young people accessing each Youth Zone. The Zones open “when schools don’t”, meaning they open from 3pm until 10pm on weeknights, and on both Saturdays and Sundays.

The way that OnSide Youth Zones structures itself is to facilitate local ownership, ongoing quality assurance, and growth. It carries key business principles into the charity world, which is why it has expanded so securely over the last 10 years. OnSide Youth Zones is the overall controlling charity, made up of executives who have operated at the most senior levels of global business, charity and policy. This organisation plots the vision, sets the values and drives quality assurance of the individual Youth Zones. They also plan and pursue the set-up of new sites, including landing the required investment, scoping out geographic areas and building local stakeholder engagement.

Each individual Youth Zone is then built as its own charity, where their governance board is made up of each of the key local stakeholders (council, business, local services), and the local young people give the Youth Zone its own name and identity. This allows each local Youth Zone to reflect local demographics, work from local ownership and respond to local need.

Case study: OnSide – The ‘how?’

The OnSide Youth Zone funding model is based on a fusion of Local Authority, business, philanthropy investment and contributions from young people in order to run. The success of the model is dependent on every partner having ownership and playing their part. There are two phases to the model, namely: ‘build’ and ‘ongoing delivery’, with different responsibilities entrusted to the different parts of the organisational structure.

The cost of building and fitting out an OnSide Youth Zone is £8m.

This is split between:

- Capital: planning, architecture, building (£7m)
- Infrastructure: networks, raising funds, community engagement (£0.75m)
- Talent academy: recruiting, employing and training staff a year before open date (£0.25m)

The role of Onside Youth Zones is to find new sites, build the stakeholder base, raise the capital from each partner. The breakdown of this financing is roughly at 50/50 between investors (business, philanthropy, Trusts/Foundations), and Local Authority.

OnSide Youth Zones has an impressive track record of raising the capital required, with £170m raised so far. Historically it takes 24 months from conception to birth of a new Youth Zone (which could be sped up by economies of scale). As part of this, the Foundation also find an initial 40 ‘founder patrons’ who sign up to give a minimum of £25k for three years to kick start the running costs coverage.

The average annual running costs for an OnSide Youth Zone is £1.3m (which varies according to the area it is based). OnSide’s goal is to operate a mixed receipt finance method, where local councils, businesses, philanthropists, and charities all foot the bill together. Included in this is contribution from young people through entry fees and membership, as such an exchange gives critical ownership.

On average, OnSide Youth Zones generate £2.03 of social value for every £1 spent on running the facilities. This equates to £6.66 for every £1 invested by the Local Authority. In Wigan Youth Zone and The Factory Youth Zone in Manchester, police have seen considerable reductions in antisocial behaviour in the surrounding areas post build. In Wigan, police reported a 77 per cent reduction in anti-social behaviour as a direct result of strategic and continued partnership work between Wigan Youth Zone and local police, whilst Harpurhey saw a 51 per cent reduction in antisocial behaviour after its opening.³¹⁰

The top five earning sports in England demonstrate the enormous sums of money in British sport, and the potential appetite for private investment in levelling up opportunities for the next generation. According to analysis by Deloitte, more than half of the world’s richest clubs by revenue are from the Premier League.³¹¹

310 Onside, 2014. “ASB levels reduce thanks to youth zones”

311 BBC, 2023. “Premier League clubs dominate richest in the world - Deloitte Money League study”

Table 7: Top UK sport sponsorship revenue

SPORT	BODY	REVENUE	SPONSORSHIP
Football	Premier League	£5.5bn ³¹²	£80.5m ³¹³
Tennis	All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club	£350.1m ³¹⁴	£55m ³¹⁵
Cricket	England Cricket Board	£310m ³¹⁶	£85m ³¹⁷
Rugby	Rugby Football Union	£189.1m ³¹⁸	£24.1m ³¹⁹

Further, sports personalities themselves are clubbing together to put their considerable assets to good use. England cricketers Ben Stokes and Jos Butler, former Manchester defender and Spanish former Arsenal defender Héctor Bellerín have co-founded a £40m venture capital fund. It claims to be the first fund of its kind to be led by athletes and will back start ups across health, sports technologies, social media and e-commerce.³²⁰

Recommendation 16

The Government should establish a Youth Infrastructure Endowment which harnesses the power of match funding to turbocharge an expanded government grant funding pot.

If young people are to avail themselves of the opportunities presented by taking part in sport and physical activity, then they need to be made aware of what's on offer. In our call for evidence, we heard that, all too often, this is not the case. Even where opportunities do exist, they can be few and far between.

"Feedback from young people consistently demonstrates the lack of knowledge as to what is available in their local area, how they can access it and information on charges. Schools are an ideal place for young people to hear about opportunities, and we have seen significant success of engaging young people in our activities from making initial contact within the school environment."

English Football League

312 Reuters, 2023. "Premier League clubs post record revenues as Europe recovers from COVID-19 impact"

313 Global Data, 2023. "Business of the English Premier League, 2022 – Property Profile, Sponsorship and Media Landscape"

314 S&P Global Market Intelligence, 2023. "The Economics of the Wimbledon Tennis Championship"

315 The Sports Daily, 2023. "How All-England Club Leaves \$75M In Wimbledon Revenue On The Table Every Year"

316 ECB. "ECB finances – where our money comes from and where it goes"

317 Ibid

318 RFU, 2023. "RFU ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22"

319 RFU, 2023. "2022 Annual Report"

320 The Times, 2023. "Sports stars hope to score big rewards with new fund"

To address this information gap, we recommend that the Government create a youth sport directory with information on locally available clubs and charities offering sport-based activities. This one-stop shop would help overcome the information gap that currently exists bringing greater awareness of what's available to young people more easily. Schools could disseminate the website and incorporate the directory into PE and PSHE lessons and Family Hubs could signpost families to this resource.

Recommendation 17

Building on the data collected through the National Youth Sector Census, DCMS should commit to creating a bespoke, child-friendly online directory of youth services, including sports providers, facilities and prices

chapter six

How sport can reduce crime by strengthening minds and mindsets

6.1 Relationship to crime: positive mindsets and good mental health can help to protect against crime

As many sporting champions well attest, competing athletically can at times be a question of ‘mind over matter’. The beneficial effects of sport on mental health are well known — as is the importance of mental health in addressing issues in criminal justice. As such, this final chapter is dedicated to considering how sports programmes can effectively improve minds and mindsets as a key preventative measure for crime.

Crime and the life of the mind are discussed in a variety of ways. Theories relating to delinquency often cite boredom as a causal factor, with sport addressing unmet sensation-seeking tendencies. Still others relate youth crime to low self-esteem and poor mental health. We explore both areas below before going on to set out the other pressures young people face which are negatively impacting on their sense of self including a lack of support, peer pressure and social media.

A 2018 study by Nicola Malizia on boredom and social deviance behaviours found a strong correlation between the two, with a correlation coefficient of 0.77.³²¹ Boredom Proneness Scores (BPS) were higher in younger age groups and people with higher scores reported being angry more often, were less likely to believe they could ever have fun and more likely to use social deviance behaviours as a means of escape.³²²

One reason suggested for why older people (aged 25+) reported lower BPS scores compared to younger people (aged 16-21) was the fact that those over the age of 25 had more demands on their time in the form of work and family obligations. Further analysis from the same study revealed that there was a strongly negative relationship between boredom and sport (–0.3804), education level (–0.8738) and leisure activities (–0.4992).³²³

321 Nicola Malizia, 2018. “Boredom and social deviant behaviour: An empirical study”

322 Ibid

323 Jugl et al, 2023. “Do Sports Programs Prevent Crime and Reduce Reoffending? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis on the Effectiveness of Sports Programs”

Boredom is also associated with sensation seeking tendencies which, according to the wider literature, is itself associated with criminal activity.³²⁴ Katz suggests that people who commit crimes seek “stimuli, excitement and a sensual experience that can come from crime”.³²⁵ For others, crime “can present a form of escapism from the mundane routines of everyday life, whereby engagement in criminal behaviour serves as a thrill where risks are undertaken for pleasure”.³²⁶ For Ekholm and Segrave, “sports provide fun and excitement that can satisfy sensation seeking tendencies in juvenile delinquents and, therefore, divert from seeking these experiences in criminal activities.”³²⁷

According to Crabbe and Green, “aspects of the sport experience present opportunities to escape the familiar anti-social ‘attractions’ that are commonly available to ‘at-risk’ youth”.³²⁸ With this in mind, sport-based interventions may help to address sensation seeking tendencies by providing stimulating alternatives to criminal activity and a positive outlet for boredom. Young people from marginalised backgrounds in particular face greater barriers to boredom-busting activities, potentially heightening the risk of boredom and later delinquency.

“Boredom is a challenge for some young people who then unfortunately find themselves engaged in less productive activities.”

New College Leicester

Home Office analysis of serious violence linked behaviours (SVLB) using data from the Millenium Cohort Study and E-Risk Longitudinal reveal something similar. In one model, respondents with low levels of self-control were nearly twice as likely to be involved in SVLBs compared to those with higher levels of self-control.³²⁹ Risk-taking was also significantly associated with SVLBs.³³⁰

Further, more clinically significant types of mental difficulties were also associated with SVLBs including having a diagnosed learning, behavioural, development or mental health problem and self-harming. Self-harm, for example, was more common among weapon users/carriers with just under half (41.1 per cent) of weapon users/carriers reporting self-harm compared with 14.6 per cent of non-weapon users/carriers.³³¹ Analysis of a group of young offenders by Crest, meanwhile, also reported high levels of mental health need for this cohort. 35 out of 57 young offenders had recorded mental health needs.³³²

324 Weybright EH, Schulenberg J, & Caldwell LL, 2020. “More bored today than yesterday? National trends in adolescent boredom from 2008 to 2017” *The Journal of Adolescent Health*, 66(3), 360–365.

325 Carolina Gutierrez Cadavid, 2021. ““Feeling like Rapunzel, You Know?”: A Narrative Inquiry of Youth, Boredom, and Deviance”

326 Morgan et al, 2019. “Participation in sport as a mechanism to transform the lives of young people within the criminal justice system: an academic exploration of a theory of change”

327 Jugl et al, 2023. “Do Sports Programs Prevent Crime and Reduce Reoffending? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis on the Effectiveness of Sports Programs”

328 Morgan et al, 2019. “Participation in sport as a mechanism to transform the lives of young people within the criminal justice system: an academic exploration of a theory of change”

329 Home Office, 2019. “An analysis of indicators of serious violence: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study and the Environmental Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Twin Study”

330 Ibid

331 Ibid

332 Crest, 2021. “Violence and vulnerability”

Many of the responses to our call for evidence emphasised the pressures young people are facing. Covid-19 and successive lockdowns, pressure from peers and elders, and social media were all cited as negatively impacting on young people's self-esteem and mental health.

The table below summarises the key mental health related difficulties most frequently cited by delivery organisations.

Table 8: Top mental health related challenges to engaging in sport and physical activity

CHALLENGE	QUOTE
Depression and anxiety	<p><i>"The impact of the pandemic has seen a huge rise in anxiety, depression and mental health issues within young people as a lot if not all activity came to a halt."</i> New College Leicester</p> <p><i>"Lockdowns and school closures continue to have a knock-on effect on young people's mental health, social lives and ability to engage with school."</i> Empire Fighting Chance</p>
Social anxiety and isolation	<p><i>"The pandemic and lockdown created a culture of isolation and caused a lot of social anxiety issues amongst young people."</i> Pennine Oaks</p>
Body image concerns	<p><i>"Depression, stress, exam stress, confidence, and body image / ID - there is a large amount of young people who are struggling with who they identify as males, female, bi binary etc."</i> Active Leeds</p>
Increasing levels of clinical need	<p><i>"We are seeing an increasing number of young people being referred to us with more severe mental health difficulties. With waiting lists for NHS CAMHS support getting ever longer, especially since the pandemic upended their lives, young people are losing hope of getting the support they need."</i> Empire Fighting Chance</p>
Low self-esteem	<p><i>"Low self-esteem as a result of stigmatisation."</i> Youth Ngage Kent</p>
Anger	<p><i>"Poor mental health including increasingly anger and anxiety."</i> Community Action Isle of Wight</p>

Frontline practitioners and organisations also referred to complex interpersonal relationships between young people and the people and institutions around them, and the impact this has on their choices and self-perception.

"Another significant challenge facing young people, is their own position in relation to their friends, family, and the institutions they interact with daily. How young people see themselves relative to the people and organisations around them not only affects how likely they are to take part in sport and physical activity, but also the impact of positive role models available to them."

English Football League

Peer pressure was also frequently cited as a source of contention, with young people grappling with not wanting to be seen as weak on the one hand, while also wanting to shine without feeling like the odd one out on the other.³³³ Drugs and alcohol misuse was yet another pernicious pressure among peers, with substances reported to be much more readily available nowadays and both “cool” and “socially acceptable”.³³⁴

Many of the young men at our lived experience roundtable also reflected on the pressures they felt growing up, and how, in some cases, it played part in their involvement in criminal activity. Like most young people, the criminal justice-experienced young men also felt under pressure to be and look certain way. For them, their image wasn’t so much a nice to have as it was a means of survival.

“Man had a reputation to live for. You get what I’m trying to say? I didn’t know what that really meant. I come out my door and I have man gassing up for the wrong reasons.”

Anon, lived experience roundtable

The young men, who were simply trying to ‘find themselves in the streets or in the blocks’, explained how the older boys, sometimes called elders, would prey on that vulnerability.

“You have the elders lead a man wrong, you understand? At the end of the day, when you’re on the strip, on the block, you got the elders looking for that vulnerability within you. You don’t have peace, your trainers are whack, your clothes are not the image that you want to be wearing outside.”

Anon, lived experience roundtable

Social media and technology also emerged as sources of additional pressure and anxiety for young people navigating the digital world of the 21st century. In particular, social media – and platforms like Snapchat, TickTock and Instagram – was thought to be linked to lower self-esteem through an increased concern and preoccupation around “body image, what they should wear, how they should look, behavioural traits and much more”.³³⁵ Concern for what one has – or doesn’t have – can also be exacerbated by a social media-driven world in which “kids brag to others about what they’ve got”.³³⁶

With legislation on the backfoot in this space, respondents also expressed concerns around online safety and cyber-bullying. *“Cyberbullying is so widespread, and it can take place anonymously. This can lead to anxiety, low self-esteem and ultimately to self-harm.”* **Bodmin Boxing Club**

Sadly, though unsurprisingly, research from the Youth Endowment Fund’s survey of 2,000 13 to 17 year olds revealed that, over the last 12 months, more than half (55 per cent) of young people had witnessed real-life acts of violence on social media.³³⁷ Our roundtable with criminal-justice experienced young men added nuance to this, in particular through

333 CSJ Call for Evidence, Newcastle Blue Star FC

334 CSJ Call for Evidence, Active Communities Surrey

335 CSJ Call for Evidence, Active Communities Surrey

336 CSJ Call for Evidence, Durham County Boxing Club

337 Youth Endowment Fund, 2022. [“Children, violence and vulnerability 2022: A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people’s experience of violence”](#)

a discussion around 'violations' that occur on social media forcing retaliations in kind. Violations, in this case, refers to public embarrassment, getting chased down or bullied while being filmed.

"People don't like to get violated. As a man you're growing up, as a young man, you're getting violated, people disrespecting you. Now you've got social media, you can see everything."

Anon, lived experience roundtable

"I've seen people I know change from seeing themselves being violated on social media – 'nah nah I'm not having it'."

Anon, lived experience roundtable

And it's not just young people either. One participant told us he'd been sent a video of a women walking in Brixton, violently assaulted in an unprovoked attack.

*The other day someone sent me a video of someone's mum walking in Brixton getting punched up...And this is an old black woman walking about her business. She don't even look like, you know like, ... she's clued into anything, just getting boxed round the shop and no one's even helping. People's mum's are getting nacked."*³³⁸

Anon, lived experience roundtable

6.2 Why sport works: engaging in sport and physical activity can bust boredom and boost self-esteem

Sport based interventions can offer a twin-pronged attack against the risks posed by boredom and low-self-esteem to children at risk of offending. At its simplest, time spent taking part in sport acts directly on time that could otherwise be spent engaged in criminal activity. In other words, it offers a diversion as well as a positive distraction. As the old adage goes:

"An idle hand is a devil's workshop; every child has the potential to engage something; it's either they engage positive activities, or they are distracted by negative influences."

Youth Ngage Kent

The diversionary power of taking part in sport and physical activity was mentioned by almost all the respondents to our call for evidence. The key elements of this diversionary power are summarised in the table below.

³³⁸ To get hit or slapped.

Table 9: The diversionary power of sport

DIVERSIONARY ELEMENT	QUOTE
The young person is off the streets	<p><i>"Whilst a young person is at a boxing class etc. they are not out on the street for that time period, making it less likely for crime to be committed by that person/persons."</i> Fox Amateur Boxing Club</p> <p><i>"It has the potential to act as a diversionary activity by removing individuals from potentially negative situations, peer contacts and routines' which can help to prevent involvement in youth offending."</i> Youths of Fenland C.I.C.</p>
Engages / distracts the mind	<p><i>"When the young person is physically engaged in something so structured such as sports or physical activity, they will have no time to think about other behaviours that they may have previously thought about committing."</i> Active Communities Surrey</p> <p><i>"Sports and physical activity can have life-changing effects on young people in various ways. At the most fundamental level, extra-curricular activities such as organised sports and physical activity can help provide a distraction from other more problematic activities."</i> Dallaglio RugbyWorks</p>
Provides focus	<i>"Sport gives young people something to focus on. It gives them something to do during their free time."</i> Grassroots for Good
Somewhere else to go	<i>"For those particularly at risk of joining gangs or engaging in criminal behaviour, sport can provide them with an alternative place to go and a positive activity to take part in."</i> Lawn Tennis Association

In addition to its diversionary potential, sport also offers a safe and meaningful outlet for risk-taking behaviours that are often driven by boredom, and which might otherwise result in criminal activity. It can be exciting, providing a substitutionary adrenalin rush which, as one of our respondents put it *"is no doubt what young people are looking for when they are engaged in less productive activity."* **New College Leicester**

Expanding on this point, still others described sports and physical activity as a "positive outlet for their energy, helping them to channel physical and competitive urges in a healthy and constructive manner."³³⁹ Boxing, in particular, can be a highly effective space to do this and compete with others.

"Thinking about the roads from a money angle, it's a competition...I'm making more money...I'm badder than you... You're just bringing that same energy of being competitive and putting it into something where no one can't go to jail, no one can't get really get hurt unless they're injured. You know what I'm trying to say?"

Anon, lived experience roundtable

339 CSJ call for evidence, English Football League

For the young men that attended our criminal justice-experienced roundtable boxing offers a unique opportunity to learn to safely release – and work through – difficult emotions such as anger. It offers a literal safety net inside of which young people can be supported to work through their emotions.

"Stuff like boxing... if someone's got like, anger, boxing is the type of thing where, you know what, I can take my anger out but in a certain way. I ain't gonna go crazy because I could get knocked out. It changes your mindset."

Anon, lived experience roundtable

"Before I used to be angry a lot, but the thing that I learned with boxing is when you get angry, and you start throwing hands, that's when you get hit. So I feel like it taught me a life lesson, from boxing to outside, you know what I'm saying?"

Anon, lived experience roundtable

Finally, boxing also has strong credibility among certain communities and at-risk groups that makes it especially appealing for engaging with this cohort on their own terms.

"Boxing has credibility in the communities we work in, and the high-intensity nature of boxing training releases feel-good hormones and can help young people reduce their anxiety and release anger in a healthy way. This helps steer them away from more unhealthy outlets for their negative feelings, such as crime and antisocial behaviour."

Empire Fighting Chance

"Our sport of Olympic style boxing provides the appeal of combat which is as near to a fight situation as you can get. This attracts 'at risk' young people to the gym where work ethic, a sense of achievement, pride and above all else discipline can be installed."

Downend Boxing



As outlined in Chapter Two, for some young people, sport can be the first place that they receive praise or recognition. This is crucial in building up a young person's self-esteem, creating more resilience and therefore lower susceptibility to negative influences. This was a recurring theme in our call for evidence which emphasised the importance of self-belief and resilience as key mechanisms through which sport can help to help young people to believe in – and take steps towards – pursuing a positive path away from crime. Some of the key ways this occurs are summarised in the table below.

Table 10: How sport nurtures positive minds and mindsets

MECHANISM	QUOTE
Imbibe good values	<i>"The activities can provide the young people with a safe space to hang out and also provide them with some values about life - respect, confidence, self-esteem, how to win and lose."</i> Active Leeds
Mastering a sport	<i>"[Boxing] boosts self-belief through increasing fitness and mastery of a sport."</i> Empire Fighting Chance
Gradual engagement	<i>"We have recorded many shy or low self-esteem participants who have now developed their confidence through taking part in various sporting activities; they gradually engaged, made friends, played, ran around, laughed and felt good and kept coming back."</i> Youth Ngage Kent
Sense of purpose	<i>"For myself it's given a sense of self-worth, helping me to understand as a person, what my role is on this earth is and what I've actually come to do and then seeing how I'm meant to help other individuals and give them tools to go and provide for other people as well."</i> Anon, lived experience roundtable
Regular attendance and committed staff	<i>"I have seen young people be inspired through taking part in organised activities. Their whole life path has changed by simply being able to attend organised regular events delivered by sympathetic workers who remember their name and want them to come back and take part again. The increased confidence and self-esteem this can bring to a young person is amazing."</i> Sunderland Community Action Group
Safe space to be oneself	<i>"It's [sport] opened such a different door for me... it let me be myself, be me, you know what I mean? On the streets you got a mask on, but it's not me. I like to joke a lot but I ain't like that on the streets."</i> Anon, lived experience roundtable
Providing confidence through opportunities	<i>"It's helped me with my confidence. The first time I came to BoxUp I was a small kid, I was quiet. I never used to speak, I used to be in the corner. I used to hate talking to people. But now, growing up through BoxUp, it's given me opportunities to do stuff in a positive way. For example, people in the hood, they got opportunities to sell drugs, but I'm getting opportunities to fight and compete."</i> Anon, lived experience roundtable

6.3 How policy and practitioners can effectively tailor sports programmes to motivate young people, enabling them to overcome apathy, combat anxiety and promote positive mindsets

If we are going to change young hearts and minds, we clearly have a long way to go. Many of the pressures outlined in the previous section make engaging this cohort through sport more challenging. To do this well involves meticulously and thoughtfully addressing barriers to entry and working with young people to create activities that are designed with their specific needs in mind.

One of the main barriers to emerge from our evidence-gathering was low motivation and low confidence. Post-pandemic, young people are less inclined to take part in extracurricular sport and physical activity. They are also more self-critical and more body conscious – especially girls. The main barriers are summarised in the table below.

Table 11: Barriers to sport participation among young people

BARRIER	QUOTE
Apathy	"Since covid we have found apathy plays a large part in preventing participation." Downend Boxing
Unwilling to engage	"In our city the sports facilities are there but the young people are unwilling to engage, call it apathy or have other issues." Southchurch Park Bowls Club
Unmotivated	"Another important issue we observed was the lack of motivation shared by a few of the young people. As they grow older, it is harder to inculcate new values as habits and we found a significant portion of young people, particularly female, who were uninterested and unmotivated to engage in extracurricular activities." Dallaglio RugbyWorks
Low energy	"...being 'stuck in a rut', having low energy or struggling to settle into a routine." StreetGames
Lack of confidence	"... lack of confidence in their own abilities/skills or a lack of confidence to try new activities." StreetGames
Fear of judgment	"Fear of judgement on how they look and what they are wearing." Active Leeds

Anxiety over peer groups was also noted. Young people are inherently social creatures, and the adolescent brain is hardwired for connection. In fact, "there's something about the brain during adolescence in mammals that is hardwired to be especially sensitive to peer influence and to be more reward-seeking in the presence of peers."³⁴⁰ With the dislocation caused by lockdowns and an only gradual return to normal, young people are more anxious for their friend's presence and approval than ever before.

340 The Atlantic, 2020. "The Outsize Influence of Your Middle-School Friends"

We heard that young people won't participate in a sport-based intervention if their friends are not also participating.³⁴¹ In particular, they may find it difficult to join in if they do not have existing contacts, causing anxiety and leading to a lack of involvement.³⁴² This ties in with next challenge, namely that young people are easily led, as we have seen, by their peers, and oftentimes would prefer to just "hang out with them" instead.³⁴³

Alongside personal and social pressures affecting young people's willingness to engage in sport and physical activity, our research also found that there is increasing competition for, and demands made of, young people's time including distractions such as social media and gaming.

"One of the main challenges that prevents young people engaging in sport, PA, play and movement is their motivation levels to access the provision as there are many distractions available for example - social media, gaming, and fear of going to the activities by themselves."

Active Leeds

Even when young people do have the time and may appreciate the benefit of taking part, not every child has the means or support from their parents to do so. Some of the challenges practitioners have encountered include caring responsibilities and a lack of parental encouragement. They are passed from pillar to post, and do not always have a constant adult figure in their lives that they can turn to if they want to be involved in any activity.³⁴⁴

"...some parents might not be encouraging participation in extracurricular activities for a host of reasons, most significantly due to competing priorities, such as work, balancing all sibling's activities in multiple-child households and the parent's own social life and interests. Some families may also tend to prioritise academics and education over sports and physical activity."

Dallaglio RugbyWorks

This theme also came through in our young people's workshop with Football Beyond Borders. In some cases, parents are not bought in to the idea that taking part in sport and physical activity is a good use of time, particularly if it is seen to come at the expense of academic pursuits.

"...I used to play [football] with a lot of other girls in secondary school, but then our coach left in year 9. So a lot of girls stopped playing, because a lot of families don't want their children, especially young girls, to join football clubs - either because this makes parents feel like their child wants to go pro and would prefer them to follow an academic path, or for financial / distance reasons. Meanwhile if it's a school team families don't mind as much, but a lot of schools don't have football teams for girls."

Fatima, FBB Young Person

341 CSJ Call for Evidence, Empire Fighting Chance.

342 CSJ Call for Evidence, English Football League

343 CSJ Call for Evidence, Safe and Sound Wellbeing Hub

344 CSJ Call for Evidence, Pennine Oak's

Finally, a strong sense of poverty and cultural-related othering were also found to act as impediments to taking part. Culturally, Muslim girls in particular are sometimes discouraged from taking part in certain types of sport due to traditional gender roles or the need for single-sex spaces.³⁴⁵

"The perceived need for 'formal' dress code and equipment can prove a barrier for both males and females, and for some females, their faith / culture may require single sex sessions and consideration of dress code. In some communities, there are structural, environmental and individual factors that make being active less of a 'social norm'".

Lawn Tennis Association

Two of the female young people from our Football Beyond Borders workshop reflected on the barriers facing inner-city girls playing football and the lack of hijab-wearing representation.

"It's hard for girls specifically in the inner-city boroughs to make it in football. So you've got the England women's first team, but how many of them are hijabis, how many of them are from inner city boroughs? Playing football as a girl gives you a certain level of respect, as it is a male-dominated sport."

Inaya, FBB Young Person

345 CSJ Call for Evidence, Empire Fighting Chance



"For a lot of girls they will stop playing a sport because they have no role models that look like them, are the same religion as them, same ethnicity. I wouldn't be able to name one muslim female footballer right now. I lost my inspiration and so I ended up losing my interest in football a bit. I think it really helps to have a relatable figure in the field that you want to be in in the future."

Fatima, FBB Young Person

For some, the barriers relate to a poverty-related 'othering', with clubs, staff and local communities that don't fully appreciate children's socio-economic contexts. Clubs, for example, can be selective, seeking out, as one submission put it, "a certain class of child".³⁴⁶ Still some sports providers lack empathy for young people and their families who come from low-income families.³⁴⁷ This was echoed by another provider who had this to say:

"Community members may also cause barriers as some members feel that young people do not deserve the support and financial cost incurred when delivering community-based activities as they don't have the understanding or empathy of the impact of young people who can be trapped into criminal activities through no fault of their own and the inter-generational barriers and attitudes of young people have no respect."

Youth of Fenlands C.I.C.

To tackle the aforementioned barriers, providers and policy makers must make sure that the provision on offer is designed with the young person in mind. Throughout the course of our research, we heard about provision with restrictive KPIs or organisations that failed to properly work with, and alongside, the young people and the communities they were set up to serve.

"A key reason for low interest and uptake may also be the inability to tailor our interventions to the needs of all our young people and their complex needs. Our KPIs are valuable yardsticks to measure our intervention, but aligning all our programmes to our KPIs often puts more pressure on the programme to deliver high results for a wide body of beneficiaries within a small time period. Long-term interventions need longer-term funding to provide more far-reaching impacts."

Dallaglio RugbyWorks

"Really knowing what young people want to do and not assuming is another key challenge that many a national organisation should take note of. Far too often funding comes with ridiculous criteria that steers projects down a road that ends up creating provision that is of no interest to young people and if it is it is generally as a one-off and with no sustainability."

New College Leicester

³⁴⁶ CSJ Call for Evidence, Durham County Boxing

³⁴⁷ CSJ Call for Evidence, Sunderland Community Action Group

Fundamentally, young people have to want to take part. To do this well, organisations have to tap into the psyche of the young person, providing an offer that, as well as being accessible and affordable, is also attractive. One of the key ways to build an attractive offer is to take a person-centred approach. This involves creating projects that are designed with young people in mind and which are adaptive and responsive to their needs as well as those of the local community.

The English Football League, for example, follows the principle of “nothing about us, without us”. In other words their activities are designed and influenced by the young people they are seeking to work with. For the past 12 months, they have been delivering the Youth Endowment Fund’s Peer Action Collective where they trained 12 young people as peer researchers and consulted with other young people on local concerns around youth violence with rich and enlightening responses received, to help develop practical solutions.

A genuine sense of ownership is another key ingredient, along with treating the young people with an appropriate level of trust and respect.

“The most important aspect is the involvement of the young people you are targeting when planning a sporting intervention as it affects them. If they feel they have a voice and opinion in the formation of a project, and that these will be taken on board, the young people are more likely to want to take part in these interventions. Young people are often overlooked and ignored as they are ‘too young to know what’s best’; Giving them a choice will make all the difference in how well they engage. Treating them with a level of respect as you would adults.”

Pennine Oaks

An in-depth understanding of local need is also essential, as is having a strong reputation locally which helps boost credibility. Research by Dr Holly Collinson-Randall of the University of Loughborough London supports this.³⁴⁸ Her work on tackling knife crime through sport highlights the importance of “a hyper-locality specificity on disruptive development.” According to her, “a strong community presence” is key to a programme’s success.³⁴⁹

Place based working was commonly referred to, as was community-wide engagement. This is important not just from a practical perspective but also in terms of safeguarding. Contextual safeguarding, which is alert to extra-familiar harms and explores the places and spaces that young people inhabit and may be vulnerable to harm in, requires a place-based operating approach. Achieve Thrive Flourish, for example, undertake ‘Community Discovery Days’ to understand local areas.

“Sport changes lives. There is absolutely no doubt about that. However, to achieve that it needs to be developed in line with local need. Or as some may call it through place-based working and a whole system approach. You must develop sport alongside local people to build communities from the inside out and not with top-down driven initiatives that promote a silo mentality. Empowering local organisations, local leaders and local volunteers is the key to developing a need’s led sporting offer.”

New College Leicester

³⁴⁸ Dr Holly Collinson-Randall, 2022. “Disrupting knife crime through sport”

³⁴⁹ Ibid

Case study: New College Leicester

Diversionary activity should be needs-led and ideally developed by young people, for young people. In the past, I have managed a project entitled Safer Communities through Sport which was hugely successful. One of the huge success stories of this project was the collaboration of local stakeholders, volunteers and young people to create needs-led local opportunities. The project developed a process called D.E.E.P. Diversion, Education, Enforcement & Prevention which when combined were an extremely effective tool at dealing with ASB and preventing ASB issues.

An example of the success of this project was the creation of a skate park in a local area that was experiencing high levels of ASB. Led by a young people's forum and supported by various agencies and local volunteers the project attracted a huge amount of external funding that also funded the employment of a local Youth Sports Development Officer. Capital funding alone is not enough to make a difference. It is people that make the biggest difference. However, the fact that this project created a facility that was free to use was an added bonus and legacy.

The key stakeholders, and their roles, are set out below.

- The police enforced any measures within their power should young people continue to engage in ASB. (Acceptable Behaviour Contracts – Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) – Dispersal Orders)
- A local school educated young people about the consequences of ASB, which helped reduce the number of incidents.
- A local neighbourhood watch group along with a localised CCTV system were just 2 of the highly effective preventative measures that were in place.
- The young people themselves owned the project and policed it accordingly.

This combined effort all working towards the same vision of reducing ASB through the DEEP model was extremely effective.

A delicate balance must be achieved between competition on the one hand, and fun on the other, must be achieved. While it will invariably vary from person to person, an over-emphasis on formal competition can act as a barrier to entry. This was perceived to be more of an issue in traditional space such as sports clubs. Less common activities like Dodgeball, Kin-Ball, Archery and Parkour were reported to be most successful in reaching the so-called 'hard to reach'.

"What we have to realise though is that traditional sports and clubs are often not the ideal environment due to the competitive ethos that exists in clubs. Clubs can be quite daunting places for a kid who just wants to play for fun."

New College Leicester

“Sport and physical activity can represent shameful or embarrassing experiences for some young people so it is helpful to maintain a playful, light-hearted and inclusive atmosphere, which encourages acceptance and group connection, while at the same time providing opportunities for participants to grow and develop further should they wish.”

Achieve Thrive Flourish

To overcome the anxieties – and barriers – articulated above, we recommend that the Government launch a youth-led public awareness campaign that positions sport as a socially acceptable, relevant, and meaningful opportunity for young people to gain skills, make friends, and think positively about their future. In keeping with the principle of co-creation, the Government should convene a youth advisory board to help inform the campaign and ensure reach into the most disadvantaged groups. The Government should draw inspiration, and learn, from the success of the *This Girl Can* campaign to inform the design and brief.

Recommendation 18

DCMS should launch a youth-led public awareness campaign on the benefits of sport and physical activity.



Conclusion

This nation's young people represent our greatest source of untapped potential – sport and physical activity are the key to unlocking it. But there is still a way to go.

We need direction, vision and leadership from the very top. A Prime Minister led Taskforce is required to kick-start this revolution and to level the playing field in school and beyond. Our new Right to Sport will help to finally close the 'activity gap', putting the most disadvantaged young people back on track and providing positive pathways into education and out into the world of work.

And it's not just our young people that stand to benefit. Our communities will become happier, healthier, and safer places as young people re-engage with education, family ties are strengthened, life skills are acquired and endorphins released. Our prisons too, through greater access to sport and physical activity, will be able to deliver transformative work for the men and women in custody, equipping them with the tools they need to succeed on release.

Sports, as this report has demonstrated, is not a 'nice to have' area of policy, but one that none of us, especially young people, can do without. Now is the time act.

On your marks, get set, go.

List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

The newly announced National Physical Activity Taskforce should be bigger and bolder. We recommend four key changes:

- **Prime Minister led** - nothing less will do. The vision must come from the top.
- **Prioritise children and young people** – beginning with devising the first ever inter-departmental strategy for young people's access to sport.
- **Focus on sport for social good** - clearly articulating how Government departments can work together to harness the power of sport to achieve social policy objectives including preventing offending and increasing school attendance.
- **Partner with grassroots clubs and charities** – the taskforce must include representation from locally trusted, grassroots organisations and charities that support at-risk groups.

Recommendation 2

Sport England should ensure that it makes granular data on its spending publicly available, paying particular attention to how it is targeted at key populations including those that are least active and those that are disadvantaged. Further, alongside system partners, Sport England should also directly fund national delivery organisations that work with disadvantaged young people.

Recommendation 3

The Government should publish the results of its consultation into local authority statutory guidance on youth service provision before the end of this parliament. This should be undertaken with a view to providing greater clarity on the 'youth service duty' and setting out, in concrete terms, what counts as 'sufficient' youth service provision with examples.

Recommendation 4

The Government should announce a new Right to Sport for all secondary school pupils, underpinned by new funding to unlock five hours of extracurricular activity for every pupil in secondary schools in England. The Right to Sport would see all pupils participate in a minimum of two hours of extracurricular sport per week, on top of PE time already scheduled on the curriculum, closing the 'activity gap' between state school pupils and their independently educated peers.

Recommendation 5

The Government should establish a new, £1bn, outcomes fund to tackle complex social problems, including youth offending, as well as establish corresponding standards for data collection.

Recommendation 6

Notable by its absence in the SEND Improvement Plan, the Government should review the evidence for the role sport can play in supporting students with special educational needs.

Recommendation 7

The Government should launch a review into existing coaching qualifications to ensure they are fit for purpose, including examining how youth work qualifications could aid sports coaches supporting at-risk children and young people and vice versa.

Recommendation 8

The Government should update statutory guidance to ensure that all Family Hubs have access to, and make use of, a comprehensive list of local sports organisations in their area. The guidance should, further, detail how they can make best use of connecting and convening power to improve collaborative working and strategy alignment between local sports organisations and other service providers—in particular with a view to reducing the risk of young people becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. This should enable referral in both directions; from sports to family hubs and vice versa.

Recommendation 9

The Opening School Facilities funding should prioritise applications from schools in areas with the highest levels of youth violence.

Recommendation 10

The Department for Education should update statutory guidance on setting up partnerships to include sharing of facilities for sports and physical activity between the independent and state education sectors.

Recommendation 11

The Charity Commission currently sets the bar for independent schools meeting their public benefit test. The government should intervene to make sharing of sports facilities a mandatory minimum baseline for meeting this test, subject to individual schools' assets and resources.

Recommendation 12

The APPG for Sport and Physical Activity in the Criminal Justice System should carry out a review into how all criminal justice commissioners are using sport to create safer communities across England and Wales and make recommendations for strengthening and embedding collaborative working in future.

Recommendation 13

The Government should commit to implementing, in full, the recommendations from the 2018 independent review of sport in justice including ensuring every secure environment has a physical activity strategy and encouraging more partnerships between prisons, community groups and sporting bodies.

Recommendation 14

The Ministry of Justice should work with Oasis Restore to share emerging learnings and models of best practice, particularly relating to sport, with the wider youth estate with a view to replicating successful programmes in other parts of the youth estate.

Recommendation 15

The Ministry of Justice should publish data on physical activity levels in prisons.

Recommendation 16

The Government should establish a Youth Infrastructure Endowment which harnesses the power of match funding to turbocharge an expanded government grant funding pot from which to embark on an ambitious programme of building new youth clubs and services.

Recommendation 17

Building on the data collected through the National Youth Sector Census, DCMS should commit to creating a bespoke, child-friendly online directory of youth services, including sports providers, facilities and prices.

Recommendation 18

DCMS should launch a youth-led public awareness campaign on the benefits of sport and physical activity.

Appendix

(a) Snapshot of recent sport and crime initiatives

Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces³⁵⁰

Amount:	£15m	Objectives:
Term:	Three years	22 schools will benefit from Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces, which work directly with young people in Alternative Provision settings to offer intensive support from experts, including mental health professionals, family workers, and speech and language therapists.
Date:	2021	
Department:	DfE	
		Bringing this wider range of professionals together aims to reduce the risk to these pupils of being exploited and entering a life of crime, and helping them move into further education, employment or training after they finish school.

Opening school facilities

Amount:	£10.1m	Objectives:
Term:		Post Covid, the Government pledged to “help more schools open their facilities to the public once the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic is over.” ³⁵¹ The funding was designed to “help schools deliver extra-curricular activities and open their facilities outside of the school day during evenings, weekends and school holidays. However, large scale capital/building works aren’t eligible items for this funding.” ³⁵²
Date:	2021	
Department:	DfE	

SAFE Taskforces³⁵³

Amount:	£30m	Objectives:
Term:	Three years	SAFE (‘Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed’) taskforces which will be rolled out in 10 serious violence hotspots areas. This 3-year initiative will be led by local schools, bringing headteachers together to support vulnerable young people, and avoid them becoming involved in county lines and criminal activity.
Date:	2022	
Department:	DfE	
		Areas benefiting include: Birmingham, Newham, Manchester, Lambeth, Leeds, Southwark, Sheffield, Bradford, Liverpool and Haringey.

Grassroots football facilities

Amount:	£39m	Objectives:
Term:		116 projects received funding to create and improve grassroots football facilities, so that “more local communities can access high-quality facilities.” ³⁵⁴ The investment was designed to “improve the quality of community facilities, bring people together to enjoy playing sport in their local area, regenerate communities and enhance social cohesion.” ³⁵⁵
Date:	2022	
Department:	DCMS	

Holiday activities and food programme

Amount:	£200m	Objectives:
Term:	Three years from 2021	The ‘Holiday activities and food programme’ caters for school aged children from reception to Year 11 who receive benefits-tested free school meal. Provision is voluntary and is designed to, among other things, enable children to be safe and active over the holidays, and take part in enrichment activities. ³⁵⁶
Date:	2022	
Department:	DfE	

350 Department for Education and Vicky Ford MP, 2021. “Targeted support for vulnerable young people in serious violence hotspots”

351 Sport England, 2021. “New funding to help schools open their sports facilities”

352 Department for Education, et al., 2023. “School sports given huge boost to level the playing field for next generation of Lionesses”

353 Active Partnerships, 2021. “Supporting Schools to develop their opening facilities community offer”

354 DCMS, 2022. “116 Grassroots football facilities across England to be regenerated through UK government investment”

355 Ibid

356 Department for Education, 2022. “Holiday activities and food programme 2022”

Opening School Facilities		
Amount:	£57m	Objectives:
Term:	Three years	Through its three-year Opening School Facilities programme the Government pledged £57m for “the opening school facilities programme - to open up more school sport facilities outside of school hours especially targeted at girls, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs.” ³⁵⁷
Date:	2023	
Department:	Cross-government (DfE, DCMS, DHSC)	
		In the test and learn phase, 23 Active Partnerships worked directly with 230 targeted primary and secondary schools over the course of 15 months. ³⁵⁸
		Funding is distributed to targeted schools working to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• increase the use of school sport facilities outside the school,• address any actions needed to open safely and;• provide more opportunities for young people to take part in sport and be physically active.
National Youth Guarantee ³⁵⁹		
Amount:	£560m	Objectives:
Term:	Three years	The guarantee pledged that, by 2025, every young person in England will have access to regular out of school activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer.
Date:		
Department:	DCMS	
		(i) Youth Investment Fund (£378m)
		Commitment to deliver up to 300 new and refurbished youth facilities in the most deprived parts of England over the next three years.
		(ii) Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme (£22m)
		The Duke of Edinburgh Award will be offered to all state secondary schools in England and youth group waiting lists will be scrapped.
		(iii) National Citizenship Service (£171m)
		Thousands more young people will be provided with opportunities to become ‘world and work ready’.
Million Hours Fund ³⁶⁰		
Amount:	£3.7m	Objectives:
Term:	Summer holidays	£3.7m from the Million Hours Fund has been allocated to 400 youth services across the country to tackle antisocial behaviour and improve access to opportunities such as cooking lessons, day trips and sporting activities during the summer holidays.
Date:	2023	
Department:	DCMS	
Violence Reduction Units		
Amount:	£64m	Objectives:
Term:		Set up in 2019, Violence Reduction Units are a pioneering initiative established in 18 police force areas across England and Wales, bringing together local partners in policing, education, health, and local government, to share information in order to identify vulnerable children and adults at risk, helping steer them away from a life of crime and violence. ³⁶¹
Date:	2022	
Department:	Home Office	

357 Department for Education, et al., 2023. “School sports given huge boost to level the playing field for next generation of Lionesses”.

358 Active Partnerships, 2021. “Supporting Schools to develop their opening facilities community offer”

359 Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, et al., 2022. “Government outlines ambitious plans to level up activities for young people”.

360 DCMS, 2023. “Millions awarded to youth services for summer holiday activities”

361 Home Office, 2022. “‘Whole-system’ approach to tackling violent crime is working”

Cutting youth crime

Amount:	£300m	Objectives:
Term:	Three years	The funding is designed to support every single council across England and Wales in catching and preventing youth offending earlier than ever, helping to stop these children and teenagers from moving on to further, more serious offending. Local authorities will be given specific cash to intervene early with teenagers displaying signs such as poor school attendance, troubles at home, and a history of substance abuse which are known to be factors which often drive young people into crime – so they can steer them away from law-breaking before an offence is even committed.
Date:		
Department:	MoJ	

(i) Turnaround scheme (£60m)

Youth Offending Teams will be given extra funding to connect children and teenagers to targeted, wraparound support to stop them going down a path of criminality.

This could include mentoring, extra school tuition, sports clubs, help to address any issues at school or at home, with their mental health or with substance misuse, tackling the root causes of their behaviour and helping them to get their lives back on track.

The package also includes an uplift in core funding for YOTs, such that together with Turnaround funding, central government funding for YOTs will be around £100m a year, compared to around £75m currently.

(ii) Youth justice sport fund (£5m)³⁶²³⁶³

This early intervention grant fund will fund voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to carry out targeted work supporting children considered to be vulnerable to involvement in crime and violence, using sport as a vehicle to address problem behaviour.

This investment builds on growing evidence indicating that sport and physical activities can act as a 'hook' to effectively engage young people in targeted crime prevention support (e.g. mentoring or volunteering). Sport can be used as a route within projects to provide a wider package of interventions, such as those focussed on life skills and employment.

362 Ministry of Justice & The RT Hon Dominic Raab MP, 2022. "New sports fund to tackle youth crime"

363 Ministry of Justice, 2023. "Youth Justice Sport Fund"

(b) Right to Sport delivery models

Extended day delivery models

The majority of existing after-school provision is teacher-led.³⁶⁴ The following table explores other potential options for delivering the extended school day identified in the literature and desk-based research.

SCHOOL-LED	EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS	EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS
<p><i>New staff</i></p> <p>Hiring a fundraising member of staff to identify, apply for and secure new revenue streams to fund extra-curricular activity.</p> <p>Appointing a Community Manager to run out-of-normal timetable provision and develop links with the community and partnership working with external organisations.</p> <p><i>Existing staff</i></p> <p>Teaching assistant-led where either: provision is run on a voluntary basis, contracts are extended to reflect additional time and responsibility or specific payment is made on a per-session basis.</p> <p>Teacher-led where staff contracts are amended to take account of additional hours or new staff are hired to deliver after hours provision. Many schools already delegate responsibility for extra-curricular activity to middle-leadership staff via an additional teaching and learning allowance.</p>	<p><i>Commercial, voluntary and community sector (CVCS) organisations</i></p> <p>CVCS organisations are commissioned to deliver activities across the extended school day e.g. community sports clubs, youth clubs, education-focussed or sports for development charities, actors from the children's activity provider sector, sports coaches, leisure centre workforce staff or volunteers.</p> <p>Larger sporting organisations such as the Premier League run their own community sports programmes free of charge e.g. Kicks where the same are funded through National Governing Bodies.³⁶⁵</p> <p>Provision of goods and services vary and may include, in the case of community sports clubs, mutual support for events (e.g. sporting fixtures), training and development pathways for promising student athletes, sharing of sports facilities including physical assets like pitches and sports centres but also equipment and transportation, sponsorship of school programmes and pro bono coaching time.</p>	<p>Schools may work with other schools (individually or as part of multi-academy trusts or school sports partnerships), across boroughs or with neighbouring independent schools to jointly deliver extended sports provision spanning staff, facilities, equipment, transportation and shared sports fixtures.</p> <p>There are 220 school sports partnerships that are still in operation and 450 school games organisers that facilitate inter-school sports and competitive fixtures across clusters of schools. Existing school sports coordinators that remain in-situ and competition managers could help to facilitate the organisation of the extended school day, with local CVCS providers leading on delivery.</p> <p>Where MATs are concerned, a dedicated team can travel and work across trusts focussed solely on coordinating and delivering extended day activities for all schools in that trust.</p> <p>Universities may offer their facilities to local school groups for after-school sports. Many are already open to members of the public e.g. Imperial College's 25 metre swimming pool in South Kensington, London - doing so would help them to meet widening participation targets.</p>

Source: The Centre for Social Justice, A Level Playing Field (December 2020).

364. Department for Education, August 2017. 'Extended activity provision in secondary schools' [Accessed via: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/635002/Extended_Activity_Provision_in_Secondary_Schools.pdf]

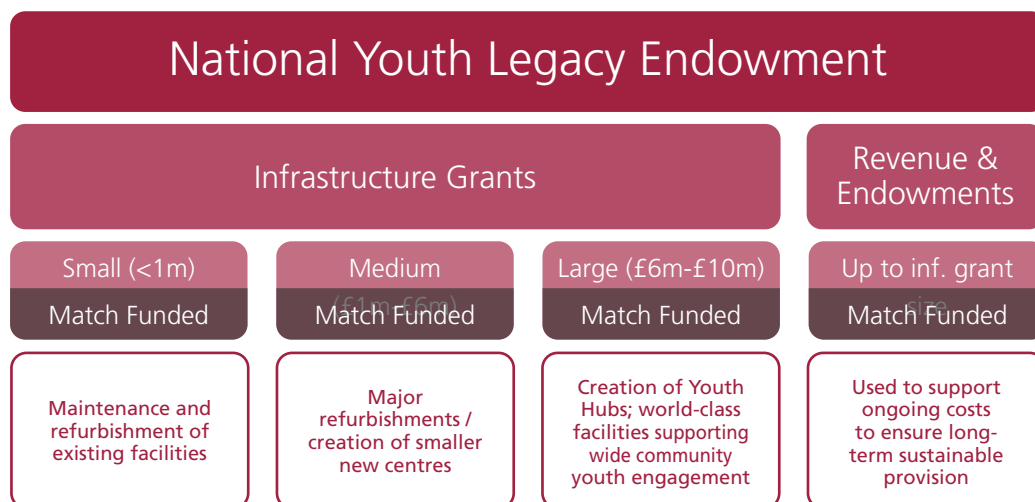
365. Premier League Kicks [Accessed via: <https://www.premierleague.com/communities/programmes/community-programmes/pl-kicks>]

(c) SIB Factsheet

Our public service silos have a poor track record of helping people with serious and complex needs, such as reoffending and addiction. The pandemic has only served to worsen these persistent problems. SIBs are one of the best proven ways to tackle this, engaging small local providers and new social and flexible investment, to turn people's lives around.

- When contracting with organisations to deliver public services, shifting payment away from prescribed inputs and towards achievement of desired outcomes can drive greater impact for citizens and better value for money for the public purse.
- However, procurement processes which transfer large financial risk and working capital requirement onto delivery organisations will likely result in a restricted market of bidders, where only large organisations with big balance sheets are able to participate.
- Big Society Capital has catalysed a thriving social investment market (>£2bn) to address this issue, enabling local consortia to bid for and deliver outcomes focused services successfully.
- This structure is ideally suited to those policy areas where a) services are **highly personalised** and therefore difficult to specify centrally with a 'one size fits all' solution; and b) where **local communities** and the **voluntary sector** can play an important role.
- In these circumstances, this 'Outcomes Partnership' model has shown that it can achieve:
 - a) **better outcomes and better value** than more traditionally commissioned services. Eg. in Greater Manchester this model has addressed rough sleeping **at less than half the cost** of other commissioning models per person housed.
 - b) **flexible design and delivery** of services, genuine collaboration across stakeholders and **much stronger accountability** for results than traditional contracting mechanisms.
 - c) **better resilience for local delivery organisations** at times of crises (demonstrated through Covid).
- The **UK has been the world leader of this approach**, accounting for around 90 of the ~200 contracts globally. Through the **pioneering outcomes funds** that Government agencies have implemented – including the most recent Life Chances Fund – **a total of £140m has catalysed a further c.£430m of commitment to outcomes** the majority of which has come from local authorities. The Outcomes Partnership model has also been used successfully at small scale by MHCLG, Cabinet Office, DCMS, DfE, DWP and DoHSC and lessons have been learned to improve the design of a larger fund.
- But previous government commitments are now coming to an end and there is no sight on further significant funding that would effectively scale the model and its benefits across policy areas.

(d) Model endowment





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