BATSON-CHILES-WEBSTER COMMISSION ON SPORT AND LOW INCOME NEIGHBOURHOODS

Roundtable 1: Sport and Community Safety
A formative report

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1. Introduction

The Batson-Chiles-Webster Commission is examining how and why neighbourhood organisations use sport to mitigate against the health and social inequalities that impact on young lives in disadvantaged areas, across England and Wales.

The emphasis of the Commission is on finding, understanding and amplifying the experiences of children, young people and the neighbourhood organisations that support them.

The inquiry will focus on:

- What role do neighbourhood organisations play in social change?
- Why does sport matter to children and young people in left behind neighbourhoods?
- What do neighbourhood organisations have to say about what works?
- What do commissioners expect?
- What are the implications for future social and economic policy?

StreetGames is the Secretariat to the Commission, supporting the process of bringing experts (academics, practitioners and young people) together to fulfil the aims of the inquiry.

Roundtable 1: Community Safety

The first roundtable focused on the theme of 'Community Safety'. It starts from the understanding that risk factors for youth crime are endemic in left behind neighbourhoods and explored:

- How does sport mitigate against these risk factors?
- How does it put protective factors in their place?

The roundtable was held on 28th January 2020 and drew on a range of evidence sources;

- Two reviews of academic literature by Walpole et al. (2019 & 2020)
- A visit to Carney's, a Community Boxing Club in Battersea, that works with young people to reduce offending and improve life chances
- A discussion group chaired by Hardyal Dhindsa the Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner and hosted by Baroness Sater, at the House of Lords.
- Participants included senior figures from sport funding bodies, police, youth justice, local government and a number of voluntary sector organisations. Academics also contributed whilst StreetGames facilitated.

What do we mean by 'sport'?

Any way people choose to be active, not just formal, rules-based games.

What do we mean by 'neighbourhood organisation'?

Groups based in and run by local communities. They are often small, with limited budgets and resources. Whilst some organisations are focused on a single sport (e.g. football or boxing clubs) many provide less formal sporting opportunities, usually offering a range of sports and tending to not enter leagues. All have a broader remit providing local people with a place to go and something to do: community betterment is their raison d'etre.

This report brings together the information collected at the Roundtable. Six key themes arising from the discussions are presented:

- Why is serious youth violence important?
- Why do some young people get involved in violence?
- What approaches work to draw young people away from violence?
- What is the role of sport?
- What are the key challenges?
- What does the roundtable recommend for future action and consideration?

2. Findings

I.   Why is serious youth violence important?

Serious youth violence has catastrophic, long-term consequences for the young people involved. It affects their physical health, their mental health and limits their future opportunities. It is recognised that there is a great deal of overlap between victims and offenders;

> *"Typically those involved in Serious Youth Violence are often both perpetrators and victims, it's unusual to be one without being the other"* (Academic)

The impact of serious youth violence also affects communities and society as a whole. One young person at Carney's was calculated to have cost society more than £1 million by the age of 18. Personal stories from Carney's help to illustrate the severity and the complexity of the issue as well as the possibility of positive change, when appropriate support is given.

One participant at Carney's came from a family with a long history of prolific offending. The 11 year old boy was illiterate and had been excluded from various schools. He had been issued with ASBOs and was being supported by child and adolescent mental health services. Carney's were able to use his passion for boxing to engage positively with him and his family. With the long-term support of Carney's he re-entered school, gained qualifications, a full-time career and now volunteers at the Boxing Club.

Participants noted that negative stereotypes about young people are often expressed in a way that would not be acceptable if about gender or ethnicity.

There was a high level of consensus between the academic evidence and roundtable participants on this theme.

II.   Why do some young people get involved in serious violence?

Multiple, complex risk factors exist for young people getting involved in violence or gangs. These our outlined in more detail in the literature review but key factors are summarised briefly here.

Poverty, either within their home or within their neighbourhood, is a key risk factor as is violence being normalised *"they see it day in and day out"* (Academic).

At an individual level violence can be used by young people as a way of countering their feelings of vulnerability and adversity (McAra and McVie, 2016). It can also result from a lack of emotional self-regulation that can emanate from experiencing complex trauma (Van der Koik). Adolescence is a risky time as this stage of development can feature increased reward seeking and intense peer pressure (Steinberg, 2008).

Gangs and County Lines

The consequences of joining a gang or becoming involved in county lines can be especially severe. Young people can be affected for life due to long-lasting physical and mental health problems and trauma. Decreased life opportunities can result due to becoming involved in the criminal justice system and not engaging with education at a critical time. This is despite their involvement often being transient and short-term.

Evidence from the academic literature and the roundtable discussion group agreed that an important reason for joining a gang is to gain a sense of belonging and access to a 'family' like structure – they want to be *"part of something bigger".*

Many at risk young people lack stability both within their own families and with individuals from statutory services, so this sense of belonging is especially important for them. Carney's gave the example of one young person who had had over 40 social workers, the only consistent adult in their life being their drug dealer.

A lack of positive role models in their communities and their everyday life is another important factor – young people are therefore drawn to more negative role models within the gang.

Girls who have experienced trauma or abuse may join gangs for protection, though they can then become victimised within the gang.

County line gangs actively target vulnerable young people, for example from Pupil Referral Units, to conduct illegal activity, drawing them in via outstanding 'debts.' Often these young people feel they 'belong' in the gang and do not see themselves as victims, at least initially.

An especially vulnerable group is 'looked after' children. This is particularly true if they are moved frequently as the lack of continuity and monitoring in their care makes them an 'easy target' for gangs and other offenders.

> *"These kids that are going missing and being moved around, those are the children that gangs are targeting"* (Police)

There was a high level of consensus between the academic evidence and roundtable participants on this theme. No divergence of opinion was noted.

What is County Lines?

This is a term used when drug gangs from big cities expand their operations to smaller towns, often using violence to drive out local dealers and exploiting children and vulnerable people to sell drugs. These dealers will use dedicated mobile phone lines, known as 'deal lines', to take orders from drug users. (National Crime Agency, n.d.)

III. What approaches work to draw young people away from violence?

Local, trusted and consistent community organisations are at the heart of the approach discussed at the roundtable. There is much variation between these organisations but all are rooted within the community, share a desire to help improve the lives of local young people and believe in the ability of sport to do this.

One beneficial characteristic of such organisations is that they are **trusted** by local people. This emanates from being part of the community **long-term** and having established relationships with local families and organisations.

> *"All have the basic pre-condition that they are trusted within their neighbourhood and they have earned the right to effect social change in that neighbourhood"* (Facilitating Organisation)

Carney's Community gave the example of one young person whose family had a long history of offending and were very wary of statutory services. They were however willing to engage with Carney's because they knew and trusted one of the coaches.

Another beneficial characteristic is that, as they are rooted in the local area, the organisations are aware of and able to respond rapidly to **local need**.

> *"What they can do, unlike say a commissioned organisation, they can respond to emergent possibilities"* (Facilitating Organisation)

Carney workers told the roundtable that local people drop in and out of the centre to talk to trusted workers about a wide range of problems – both personal and relating to statutory bodies. Whilst there are a limited number of boxing sessions per week the workers remain busy dealing with these issues.

Being connected to other organisations is an important characteristic. This includes other voluntary sector organisations in the area so that they can co-ordinate activity with and share information. A good relationship with schools is key as a way of engaging with young people in a preventative way but also as a way of ensuring continued education for young people who may have 'dropped out'.

Links to statutory services such as social services and law enforcement are vital but having some perceived distance from them (for example, police not dropping in regularly) helps maintain trust amongst local people who are wary of authority.

It was emphasised by participants that being **'locally grown'** and not 'parachuted in' is critical.

> *"The best schemes … are locally grown, that fit the local need, that react to what happens at a local level and they come from there and they grow from there"* (Youth Justice)

There was consensus at the roundtable as to the merits of these organisations, however, the organisation type was not covered specifically by the academic reviews.

Simply transplanting a successful organisation from one area to another is not possible, as they will lack the necessary reputation and relationships.

Importantly however, common elements of the support model are transferable and can be utilised by a range of different local organisations. Four common elements identified at the roundtable and via the academic reviews are described below.

Common elements:

- **The Place**

Having a place to go that is safe, fun and offers engaging healthy activities is a key element of the model.

At Carney's, young people can come and watch the sessions, then choose to take part whenever they are ready. 'Fit & Fed' provides high quality meals, free, for participants, whether they box or not. The boxing sessions are designed so young people of different abilities can participate together, each working towards their own goals. Safety is ensured by having clear boundaries and consequences for negative behaviour, though this is never exclusion. Safeguarding policies are rigorous but implemented in such a way as to not negatively affect relationships.

This element fits with the academic evidence around 'Positive Youth Development' from Garcia-Poole et al. 2019, which;

> *"supports protective factors by creating opportunities for: social bonding and engagement, setting pro-social standards, acknowledging positive behaviour, offering constructive pastimes and promoting a commitment to learning and promoting a positive identity"* (Mason and Walpole, 2020)

- **The People**

Passionate people committed to the community and experienced at working with young people, who may be exhibiting challenging behaviour, is the second key element of the model. Having staff or volunteers with lived experiences of the issues faced by participants is felt to be important. They are able to be positive role models and provide inspiration to the young people.

Carney's told the story of one of their participants who had come to them after an accident that had left them wheelchair bound. Carney's treated him normally and eventually he qualified as a gym instructor level 2. He is now able to motivate and inspire other young people with disabilities or those who think they can't do something.

Encouraging empathy amongst staff and volunteers was also identified as a key theme. Carney's describe this as trying to understand where the young people are coming from, whilst also acknowledging you can never fully understand what another person is going through.

This element fits with the academic evidence from Tucker et al. 2019 around mentoring:

> *"[Mentoring is] Associated with positive social and emotional benefits enhanced educational accomplishments and increased self-esteem"* (Mason and Walpole, 2020)

- **The Ethos**

Having an ethos that is person-centred, inclusive and supportive is the third vital element of the model. At the core of this is a belief that young people who may have offended or be involved in serious violence have the potential to contribute positively to society in the future.

Carney's describe themselves as being like 'a family' with participants given support, when they need it, over the long-term. Unlike many statutory services, they are not 'exited' when they reach a certain defined point. It is a neighbourhood resource for when people need it.

The Behaviour Change cycle was seen by roundtable participants as an important way of offering support (see figure from Carney presentation). At the pre-contemplation stage, the emphasis is on engaging the young person in activities and establishing a trusting relationship. When a 'window of opportunity' is identified, (they may, for example, have been arrested or experienced violence) and the young person reaches contemplation stage the level of individual support is intensified:

> *"that window of when they want to make a change is very, very small and that's why it's so important to be there for them when they are at that point"* (Voluntary Sector Organisation)

Relapse, perhaps repeatedly, is seen as an integral part of the process and not a reason for withdrawing support.

Inclusivity is ensured by having flexible criteria as to who can attend (unlike many statutory services). The sporting aspect needs to be delivered in such a way that everyone can participate and is not overly competitive.

This element fits with the 'strength based approaches' identified in the academic literature:

> *"the needs of the young person need to be prioritised, their capacities, rights and potentialities identified so that interventions are child-focused and developmentally informed"* (Mason and Walpole, 2020)

Positive Pathways

Offering opportunity and an alternative pathway to offending or serious violence is the final key element of this model. Initially this may involve taking on-board responsibilities at the neighbourhood organisation so the young person feels they can contribute. This helps build their confidence. Later this may involve helping the young person access formal training, gain qualifications and employment or support in setting up their own business.

At Carney's young people were able to train as personal trainers meaning they can earn a legitimate income, have a role in society and make connections outside their community. They are also able to access funds so they can set up their own businesses. Examples of this include a catering business and, a painting & decorating business.

This fits with the academic literature regarding setting up a 'pro-social identity' that will build aspiration, offers something to do, develops voice and builds confidence (Mason and Walpole, 2020). Such an identity is *"associated with a reduced likelihood of contact with the youth justice system and less contact with gang members"* (Gebo, 2016).

Universal or Targeted interventions?

The group discussed the relative merits of different types of interventions – including early / prevention, universal and targeted (see the literature review for more information).

Any young person can attend a 'Universal' intervention where the emphasis is on building protective factors to prevent offending. These types of interventions are seen as *"ideal"* as they help to stop young people entering into crime.

> *"there is a place for prevention for those people who have yet to actually go over the edge into perhaps county lines or other things that are then hard to come out of"* (Police)

In addition, universal interventions that operate in a particular area have the potential to benefit neighbourhoods as a whole. This could be by offering informal advice and support, volunteering opportunities that can develop leadership and communication skills, positive role models and healthy lifestyle opportunities.

Targeted interventions provide more intense support for young people at the most risk and, as such are necessary. They require trained, skilled staff and suitably equipped organisations to be effective – otherwise they can have a negative impact on participants.

The conclusion from the group is that there needs to be a range of intervention types including preventative work and this fits well with the academic literature presented.

There are real concerns, amongst roundtable participants, that prevention and more universal approaches are being 'squeezed out' by funding reductions that lead to a focus on more acute issues.

> *"Prevention is better than cure but when it comes to putting the money on the table is it actually put there for that?"* (Voluntary Sector Organisation)

> *"[we] need to be brave about early intervention and prevention … if we are not brave about the importance of early intervention prevention we are just creating an even longer term problem"* (Facilitating Organisation)

IV.   What is the role of sport?

Sport, by which we mean, any way of being active, has many positive aspects for young people at risk. There was general agreement between the scientific evidence presented and the expert opinions expressed at the roundtable.

Sport is a way of **engaging** with young people. They may just come and watch at first, before starting to participate. During this time, volunteers and staff can start to establish a relationship with them, thus laying the groundwork for future more intense support. It can act as a **diversion**, drawing them away from negative influences and into positive activities and places. The diversionary aspect of sport can, potentially, last a lifetime.

Carney's felt that many types of sport can fulfil this role but boxing is especially apt for young people who are being drawn into gangs. Going 'sparring' at a boxing club has credibility and lets young people exit negative situations without losing face.

Participating in sport can increase self-esteem and a sense of worth, thus improving **mental wellbeing**. One participant described how sport can help children realise they can make mistakes without onerous consequences and they gain a skill they can be proud of.

The activity provided can also have a positive impact on **physical health.** It was noted that many young people at risk have exceedingly low activity levels, poor diets and display other unhealthy behaviours, such as drinking or drug taking. Showing them an alternative way of living can be a strong motivation to practice more healthy behaviours. At Carney's healthy food is available for

participants – those facing particularly challenging circumstances can even take food home with them.

Sport, provided in a safe, supportive environment, gives young people a **sense of belonging**. This potentially means they are less likely to seek this kinship within a gang, with more harmful influences. It also exposes them to **diverse**, **positive role models**. This could be people within the organisation, or sporting heroes, who have experienced challenges similar to themselves but gone on to lead fulfilling lives.

For some young people it offers them a **positive pathway** forward in terms of employment. Many young people at Carney's lack formal schooling but go on to attain sporting qualifications that enable them to earn a living.

It is important to note that the sport provided needs to be delivered in an inclusive way so young people of different abilities can participate together and achieve individual success.

Finally, the positive role of sport was recognised by all but it was acknowledged that it has **limitations**. Sport on its own cannot solve all the problems that exist for young people at risk in disadvantaged communities.

> *"[It is] Important to acknowledge that sport is fantastically promising, has so many opportunities but it can't do it on its own, sport cannot work in isolation.. [we need to] resist overpromising."* (Academic)

Again, there was consensus between the academic reviews and the roundtable on this theme.

V.   What are the key challenges?

Three key challenges were identified during the roundtable.

- **The Funding Model**

Short-term, conditional and project-based funding is common within this sector. It was strongly felt that this model does not fit with the approach of voluntary sector organisations striving to provide long-term, inclusive support in a consistent, safe place.

This **short-term model** of funding does not reflect the long-term nature of the problems the organisations are trying to tackle. It was emphasised that it may take ten years of working with a young person before real change is made.

> *"Many, many people gave up on [a particular individual] because you couldn't fix him or turn him around within the space in a year. He came from generations of offending, …, worklessness, you can't change that in someone in 1 year, 2 years, 3 years it takes a very very long time and the message from that really is that people need to invest in the long term."* (Voluntary Sector Organisation)

It also presents problems in terms of staff retention and increases the fragility of organisations. Established voluntary sector organisations are more able to manage funding so that it covers difficult periods but smaller, newer organisations – which may be performing an important role - are less able to.

There was frustration that **project based funding** continually requires new initiatives, *"you've got to do something new"* (Voluntary Sector Organisation) as opposed to continuing to do what is working.

Funding is also often provided **conditional** on certain criteria. For example, only targeting certain ages, people from certain postcodes or for a certain amount of time. This again conflicts with the inclusive model that the voluntary sector organisations at the roundtable feel works best for young people at risk. Carney's, for example, do not 'exit' people when they reach a certain stage, as some funders require.

> *"Now you've got someone into a job, move onto the next, but actually we want to keep them in that job, which means long term support"* (Voluntary Sector Organisation)

Funders in the discussion group recognised the significance of this issue. One funding organisation agreed that the *"classic model"* of three years was too short and there needed to be a mind-set change in how neighbourhood organisations were funded. This would involve having greater trust in organisations that are working within communities and devolving power away from central funders.

> *"How do we get that inherent trust within a system that is untrusting, that actually sport can do this job and we've got to be more thoughtful about how we both identify the environments, the places it can work and then use resources to get to those people in a way that can actually be sustainable".* (Sport Funding Body)

A recent pilot project had;

> *"…forced us to behave differently, we are no longer driven by the idea that there is a direct programme funded, answer to the question, a question is posed and then we work with the local environment to work out what the best way is."* (Sport Funding Body)

Overall therefore, the roundtable reached agreement that the current model of short-term, project based funding needed to change in order for the voluntary sector to best be able to support young people at risk. How and when this would happen was not discussed.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The second key challenge identified by the voluntary sector organisations is the Monitoring and Evaluation required by some funders.

The roundtable noted that overall it is hard for statutory agencies to assess the value of services like Carney's. This type of model does not lend itself well to current measurement and investment methods and neither are they able to guarantee the outcomes desired by services. Despite this, multiple agencies do value them highly, even if there is a problem with reconciling the reasons for this with their systems.

Whilst voluntary sector organisations understood the importance of evaluation, the monitoring and evaluation methods used by some funders are felt to be inappropriate. Base-line assessments, a tool that attempts to quantify key aspects of a young person's life when they arrive at the organisation – so that the difference made can be measured later - are particularly problematic. Reasons why include:

- o Overly intrusive / formal monitoring acts as a **barrier to engagement**. This is especially true for those young people who are distrustful of authority but who are particularly important to engage.
  "We've got plenty of examples of people walking in and walking straight out when you try and do a baseline assessment on them." (Voluntary Sector Organisation)

- Base-line assessments **lack validity**. At the beginning of their relationship with the organisation, young people often do not tell the truth, instead downplaying negative feelings and behaviours. Later on, they may be more honest. Therefore, whilst in reality progress has been made, the monitoring data states the opposite.

- Base-line assessments are also likely to be **biased**, as organisations will only do them with young people who will not be put off. This is often the less challenging young people. The data is therefore not capturing an important part of the population.

- The period of time over which assessments are made is generally **too short-term**. The funder may, for example, expect to see progress in one or two years whereas, in reality, it may take many years for an individual experiencing particularly complex challenges.

- It was felt that monitoring and evaluation often measures the **wrong** things e.g. offending behaviour (when it is recognised relapse will occur) as opposed to more important measures such as participation and engagement.

- Traditional evaluation is less effective at proving the impact of prevention i.e. a young person <u>not</u> offending.

- Finally, it was felt that the **burden** of doing Monitoring and Evaluation is disproportionally high for small organisations who were not experts in this area. This means larger organisations can benefit, who may lack the reputation and connections that smaller, local organisations have.

"Most of us who run charities are not experts in monitoring and evaluation, we're experts in engaging with difficult, challenging young people and getting successes out of them, but if we spend disproportionate amount of time doing stuff we're not good at, like monitoring and evaluation…" (Voluntary Sector Organisation)

More appropriate methods were felt to be those that are less intrusive and more long-term, for example, 'living' case studies. Measuring more appropriate outcomes, for example, participation and relationships, is also a possible way forward. Carney's praised funders who evaluate via observation, carried out by the funder themselves, therefore being less of a burden on the voluntary organisation. One funding organisation had used a model of mapping provision onto stages of change and offered to share this with the group.

Policy leads and funders responded to this challenge by reiterating that they themselves need to demonstrate accountability of public funds and this is the reality of the world they are in.

"Every penny I spend I have to account for to the public accounts committee and they do look for, "What did you get back from it?" If you get locked into that type of funding stream there will be conditionality … that's the reality of what we work in." (Youth Justice)

"[We are] measured in the nth degree in what we do in policing, particularly around criminal justice, particularly around Young People, all of the funding … is about outcomes on a quarterly basis. (…) Whether you agree with measurement or not, it is what we currently have to do." (Police)

This issue was not resolved during the discussion. There remains a tension between wanting 'proof' funded organisations are making a difference and recognising this can affect their ability to make this difference. The Chair concluded that funders, commissioners and politicians need to;

> "*work out a way of not putting monitoring and evaluating as [a] burden on organisations who are not experts in this but they are experts in engaging and intervening and supporting unconditionally young people who need that support.*" (Chair)

Fundamental to this discussion perhaps is the issue of **power and trust**. One funder talked about how they needed to change their relationship with neighbourhood organisations.

> "*We are learning and we are understanding that if our job is to think we can continue to transact to the outcome we will never ever get there.*" (Sport Funding Body)

- **Austerity**

A final key challenge relates to inappropriate referrals or increased thresholds caused by austerity. This means that neighbourhood organisations are supporting young people with high mental health needs despite not having specific expertise in this or higher risk individuals than the programmes were intended for.

More broadly, there was a feeling amongst some participants that, small neighbourhood organisations, are having to deal with wider societal issues that are outside of their control:

> "*We're having to clear up, deal with this government's mess and the trail of destruction being caused by austerity.*" (Voluntary Sector Organisation)

When asked what they most needed as a neighbourhood organisation, one participant replied "*Good councils, better social services and better housing.*" (Voluntary Sector Organisation)

This concurs with a point raised in the academic review that a key challenge is the "*availability and capacity of local partners*" (Mason and Walpole, 2020).

One specific challenge raised by the roundtable relates to the issue of **looked after young people**. They are especially vulnerable to serious youth violence and therefore in great need of the benefits these neighbourhood organisations can confer. Yet their life of frequent moving means they are unable to build these relationships.

3. What does the roundtable recommend for future action and consideration?

The Chair suggested establishing a structured forum that would address how neighbourhood organisations are funded and supported. This could also serve to convince politicians of the need for long-term interventions.

Other key recommendations emerging from the roundtable are listed in a table below. Ticks in the right hand columns indicate which sector the recommendations apply to.

	Voluntary Sector Organisations	Funders / Policy Makers	Local Authorities
Work towards a funding model that provides consistent funds for local neighbourhood organisations who are best able to reach and engage young people at risk.		✓	✓
Recognise that successful neighbourhood organisations can operate in a multiplicity of ways and avoid attempting to impose uniformity.		✓	✓
Understand that neighbourhood organisations are valuable and raising standards at a neighbourhood level is a worthwhile endeavour, even though it may not be possible to attribute impact on a particular family		✓	✓
Consider ways to build the capacity of smaller, newer neighbourhood organisations, particularly in areas that may lack established groups.		✓	✓
Encourage neighbourhood organisations to work in partnership with other key local stakeholders.	✓	✓	✓
Supply side organisations (e.g. funders) to acknowledge a change in organisational behaviour and culture is needed if sport is to play its full part. This is likely to involve placing an increased level of trust on neighbourhood organisations and devolving power away from the national and towards the local.		✓	✓
Encourage the use of evaluation methods that are able to capture success but in a less intrusive way e.g. more naturalistic methods		✓	✓
Focus on evaluation measures that are achievable in the shorter-term and realistic for organisations to achieve. These could, for example, include outcomes that focus on reach, engagement, participation and relationships.		✓	✓
Establish ways to share good practice between neighbourhood organisations.	✓	✓	✓
Advocate strongly for early intervention and preventative interventions, to complement more targeted approaches.	✓	✓	✓
Advocate for maintaining / increasing services for young people in all sectors. This will mean that neighbourhood organisations can focus on reaching and engaging with young people – and are not having to deal with the more acute issues that statutory services used to handle.	✓	✓	✓

Work together with partners to avoid the negative stereotyping of young people and communicate the possibility of positive change amongst those with challenging backgrounds	✓	✓	✓

4. Conclusion

This roundtable drew experts and evidence together to focus on young people and community safety. It sought to understand how sport can mitigate against the risk factors young people face and how it can put protective factors in place.

There was agreement on the serious consequences of violence for young people and their communities. A complex set of risk factors were found to draw some young people towards gangs and violence including poverty, a response to vulnerability or trauma, a lack of positive role models and a desire to belong.

It was agreed that local, trusted voluntary organisations offering sporting opportunities can engage young people at risk. They provide a diversion, mentoring, positive role models and future opportunities, with the young people able to develop a pro-social identity. Important elements of the offer include providing a consistent safe place with engaging activities, empathetic people, an ethos that believes in young people's potential and a positive pathway forwards. Both universal and targeted interventions need to be available.

Key challenges identified relate to a funding model that is too short-term and conditional, monitoring and evaluation systems that are flawed and overly intrusive and austerity affecting statutory services provision. Recommendations focus on tackling these challenges and working towards a more long-term, trusting and devolved model of funding.

Participating organisations - Listed alphabetically

Badu Sports and Community

Carney's Community Gym

Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Leeds Beckett University

Local Government Association

London South Bank University

Loughborough University

Positive Futures

Premier League

Skyway Charity

Sport England

Sport Wales

St Matthew's Project

StreetGames

Sussex Police

Youth Justice Board

About StreetGames

StreetGames is a charity harnessing the power of sport to create positive change in the lives of disadvantaged young people in the UK. StreetGames work to make young people and their communities healthier, safer and more successful, by approaches such as 'Doorstep Sport'. They deliver their work in partnership with around 1,000 locally trusted organisations based in disadvantaged areas. https://www.streetgames.org/

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