



Closing the Gap Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

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Introduction

This Executive Summary brings together the findings from 16 evaluation reports carried out with a range of partner organisations that worked with Closing the Gap (CtG). CtG was a Lottery funded project aimed at ensuring young people at risk of social exclusion, resident in Stoke-on-Trent, experienced the same opportunity to take part as other young people in the city. CtG worked in partnership with local organisations engaged with socially excluded young people up to the age of 25, to build and catalyse organisational change as a method of increasing opportunities for participation. Sustainability was fundamental to the programme, ensuring that physical activity interventions were adopted by the partner as a means of achieving their own organisational objectives and improving the lives of targeted young people.

The interventions included in this report are:

- Social Care Residential Units for Looked After Children and Young People (pilot study)
- Treehouse, Crescent, Kingsland and Hope Children's Centres
- Blackfriars Disability Day Centre
- Compendium Housing Association and the Regeneration Project at Coalville
- Changes Young People (mental health charity)
- Integrated Family Services Unit
- Federation of Stadium Communities, Port Vale Initiative
- Groundwork Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire
- Nacro Services
- North Staffs Young Carers
- Chell Area Family Action Group (CAFAG), North Staffordshire Racial Equality Council (NSREC) and Stanfields and Meir Youth Inclusion Project (YIP)

A table outlining when each of the above partner organisations worked with CtG is available in Appendix A. There is also a list of the other partners that CtG worked with but whose projects were not at the stage to be evaluated when this report was written, in Appendix B.

The partner organisations were all different but each worked with clients who were recognised as belonging to one or more of the following target groups of "at risk" young people:

- Young people exhibiting challenging behaviour
- Young offenders
- Young people involved in substance misuse
- Young people from black and minority ethnic communities
- Looked-after children
- Young people not in contact with education, employment or training
- Young people at risk of becoming involved in prostitution
- Teenage mothers
- Young people with disabilities (including young people with special educational needs)
- Young carers

- Young people at risk of discrimination because of their sexuality
- Young homeless people

It is hoped that the findings reported in this Executive Summary will provide useful information to guide other providers of sport and physical activity, working with similar groups of young people. In particular this document will be useful because it

- Outlines the aims of the project
- Explains the methodology used to assess the needs of the partner organisations and evaluate the interventions carried out
- Provides evidence to support the argument that sport and physical activity can be a successful tool to increase participation levels, improve understanding of the benefits of sport and physical activity by young people and staff and meet the wider aims of an organisation, such as improved staff and client relationships, re-engaging young people and providing avenues for success and achievement.

Project aims and objectives

Closing the Gap has been conceived to support both the physical health and mental wellbeing of socially excluded young people who are either experiencing social exclusion or at risk of this. Due to its focus on sport and physical activity as the key vehicle, CtG has considerable potential to support a wide range of other desirable outcomes such as improving educational attainment, reducing offending / antisocial behaviour and rising aspirations / self esteem, many of which are the key organisational objectives of the programmes' partners. The project began in 2005 when a partnership with the city's residential units for looked after children was developed, in order to undertake the initial pilot of CtG. The success of this pilot was subsequently recognised at national level, in July 2007, when it beat 52 other local authorities to win the Municipal Journal's prestigious 'Promoting Active Communities Achievement of the Year' award.

CtG's central theme was:

"improving the health, well-being and quality of life of socially excluded young people and those at risk of being so through increased involvement in sport and active recreation."

The purpose of the programme was to:

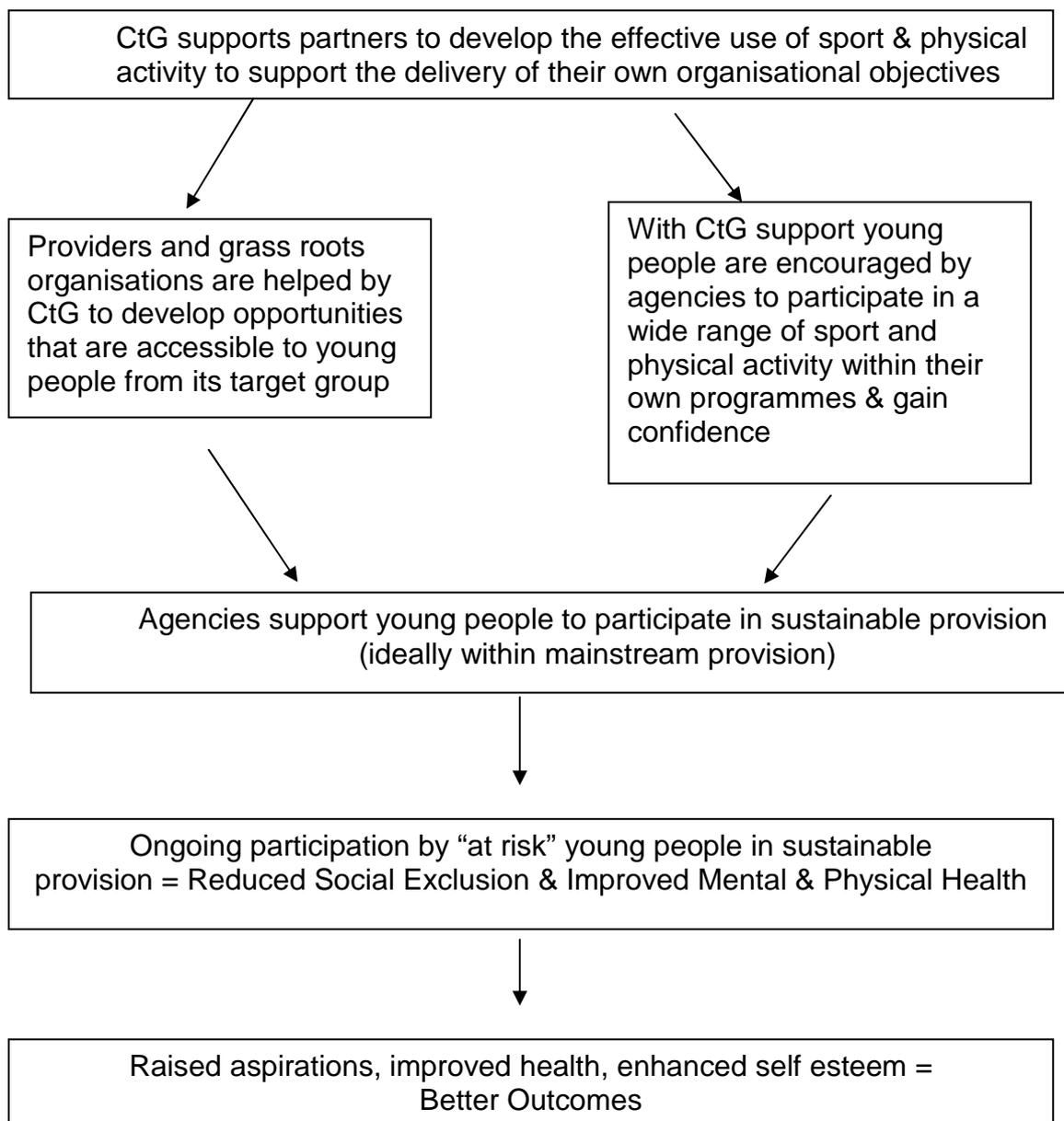
"have unlocked the potential of increased participation in sport and active recreation using this as a vehicle for change when working with young people at risk of social exclusion."

This would achieve their two overarching outcomes:

"through raising participation in sport to at least the same average level as young people as a whole in the city, young people within our target group will benefit from improved health, mental wellbeing and enhanced social capital."

"Key organisations will have a greater understanding of how sport and active recreation can be used to deliver wider crosscutting strategic objectives and apply this within their core business."

The fundamental logic of CtG can be summarised as follows:



In addition the strategies employed by CtG are based around a strong belief that a young person's experiences are driven by the attitudes, beliefs and values and subsequent actions of the three key actors; namely the young person themselves, adults in positions of influence in relation to the young person, such as staff or parents / grandparents and, thirdly, organisations who they are in contact with or who provide services that a young person may wish to access.

The strategic vision for Closing the Gap and its accompanying key outcomes are very clear:

"all young people between the ages of 0-25 will have the same opportunity to enjoy the benefits of sport and active recreation irrespective of their personal circumstances, for example who they are or where they live."

Context

There is clear evidence that indicates that regular participation in physical activity can reduce levels of poor health and crime and improves educational attainment and social inclusion⁽¹⁾. However, as Sport England⁽²⁾ states, such improvements are dependent on sport providers creating opportunities for regular, high quality provision within local communities. Levels of participation in the city are amongst the lowest in the country. Evidence suggests that sport and physical activity opportunities, although increasing, does not lend itself in favour of socially excluded young people, breeding a cycle of exclusion and ultimately impacting many peoples' lives. The importance of addressing "social exclusion" remains at the forefront of Government strategy, with responsibility now lying within the Cabinet Office for taking forward the Social Exclusion Action Plan published in 2006 and filtered through local authorities nationwide.

Stoke-on-Trent is in the bottom 20% of the most deprived areas in the UK with high levels of obesity, poor health and unemployment. Sport and physical activity participation rates in also amongst the lowest in the country. Currently 85% of Stoke-On-Trent's population is not doing the recommended level of sport and activity, which places it in the bottom quarter nationally. Tackling the issue of low participation levels in the city is a priority and targets are set to achieve a 30% increase of people undertaking at least 30 minutes of physical activity of at least moderate intensity on three or more days per week by 2012⁽³⁾. This objective primarily falls on local authority and bodies of sport to deliver interventions for the benefit of socially excluded people.

It is expected that levels of participation amongst socially excluded young people are to be lower than the general population; however there are no exact studies undertaken to confirm this theory and no data exist to this effect. In order to provide some indication of participation rates, CtG initiated a Baseline report in 2006 after its first year in working. The results in the report were to act as a baseline for comparison for the duration of the programme's existence. In 2009 they undertook another set of research aimed at 1200 young people, which revealed that participation rates had increased for "at risk" young people. For example, 82% of the respondents in 2009 were participating in 5 or more days of sport and physical activity in a typical week, compared to 50% in 2006. For those aged 16-25, 70% of respondents in 2009 met the national recommendations of participation for 3 or more days, compared to a mere 32% in 2006⁽⁴⁾.

Research Methodology

In order to ensure the needs of the organisation and their clients in regards to sport and physical activity can be met and that work has the potential of becoming self-sustainable, a number of stages were carried out as part of the planning and evaluation methodology. These are as follows:

Stage one: Completing a partnership agreement so CtG knew the aims of an organisation and they knew CtG's. Gaining an understanding of an organisation's policies, procedures and working ethos using an adaptation of the European Framework of Quality Management (EFQM).

Stage two: Prior to each separate intervention, research was carried out to establish the attitudes toward sport and physical activity, experiences and the current level of control felt over their own physical activity, as felt by the clients, staff and volunteers. The Beliefs, Barriers and Control (BBaC) model developed by Suckling⁽⁵⁾ provided qualitative data focusing on the experiences and beliefs of staff, volunteers and young people, including young parents. Data was gathered using a combination of informal interviews and questionnaires and information from young people was obtained through discussions with CtG staff to determine their beliefs, barriers and control, with respect to taking part in sport and physical activity. Staff working at the host organisations were invited to complete standard anonymous, questionnaires (Appendix C). In particular the organisation's current policies, beliefs and readiness to use sport and physical activity in their work would be evaluated. An adaptation of the EFQM, focusing on the use of sport and physical activity in the workplace, developed by Staffordshire University, was used as a basis for an interview with the management level staff (Appendix D).

Stage three: Drawing on the information gathered in stage 1 and 2, an action plan was developed. This was based on what the partner said was needed to increase sport and physical activity within their organisation and included a list of designated actions to meet these needs. This was discussed with the partner organisation, amended as necessary and then agreed.

Stage four: The action plan was followed and evaluated as ongoing.

Stage five: A full final evaluation report was written by Closing the Gap and reported back to the organisation.

As CtG took place across numerous contexts, each set of data and action points produced was context specific. This enabled CtG to be analysed both on a discrete level and also on a broad holistic one. Context, Mechanism and Outcome (CMO) was used to facilitate this process. Each context produced its own action points which would translate into specific mechanisms for delivery. The success of CtG can be measured on both the local and holistic level by measuring the outcomes which each of the mechanisms produced. Measurement was achieved through periodic repetition of the above methods to assess the level of change taking place within the two core groups, organisations and young people.

Physical Activity within the host organisations Pre CtG Intervention

The management staff at all the organisations included in this evaluation were positive about the inclusion of sport and physical exercise but policies were rarely aimed at engaging young people. The exception to this was the Children's Centres and the Integrated Family Support Unit (IFSU) who had to respond to the requirements of *Every Child Matters*⁽⁶⁾. Similar barriers existed at all of the host organisations that CtG worked with. A lack of qualifications and experience in sport and physical activity meant that nearly all of the staff and volunteers questioned were not confident enough to lead sessions. In addition, whilst management at each venue appeared to be supportive of the project and keen to include more sport and physical activities in their work, none of the organisations had specific policies or strategies in place. This meant there was no long term sustainability for any of the

host organisations to use sport and physical activity as a tool to meet the wider aims of their provision or the needs of their clients. Limited understanding about sport and physical activity was often cited as a reason for the absence of formal policies and strategies in this area.

Staff and volunteer opinions varied but in all cases at least some of them recognised the potential benefit of including sport and physical activity. Some physical exercise was taking place but very little of it was regular and all the young people questioned wanted more local activities to be organised. Research undertaken by CtG showed low levels of participation by young people at risk of exclusion prior to the intervention. Poor motivation and limited understanding was expressed by the young people at all the partner organisations but many of them appeared open to greater participation opportunities with non competitive activities requested as well as traditional team sports.

Staff and volunteers felt it would be beneficial to include sport and physical activity in their work with young people because they felt it could

- decrease anti social behaviour
- provide an avenue for improving communication, social skills and interaction with others, including the wider community
- provide an avenue for achievement
- improve self esteem and confidence
- improve physical fitness and competency
- enable young people to have fun

Staff and volunteers reported that the barriers to including sport and physical activity in their work were a lack of

- qualified management staff to develop this area of provision
- qualified staff and volunteers to run sessions
- financial resources to support training, the purchase of equipment, the hiring of facilities and other costs incurred
- space in or near to the centres used by the partner organisations
- effective partnerships

Barriers recognised by young people were reported to be a lack of

- knowledge of local facilities
- reluctance to use facilities they were not familiar with
- personal transport or poor public transport
- support from family or significant others
- friends to exercise or join clubs with
- value placed on sport and physical activity

Due to the low level of activity amongst young people, staff and volunteers prior to the intervention period, the CtG team recognised that a fundamental culture change was necessary at all partner organisations if sustainable use of sport and physical activity was to be achieved. The subsequent action plans drawn up by CtG staff involved several different types of intervention, including training for staff and

volunteers to lead physical exercise activities themselves. In addition the setting up of sport and physical activity sessions was facilitated, equipment ordered, support provided for bids to grant agencies and sports policy documents written to maintain good practice.

Interventions

“They just get so much out of it. I can’t explain what they are like when they come back on a Thursday; they are absolutely buzzing. This also does the staff good as they let rip slightly. All the clients and staff look forward to it and they will be asking me throughout the week ‘are we going the Wallace Leisure Centre this week?’ (Blackfriars Day Centre)

Although all of the interventions were different the range of mechanisms used by CtG were broadly similar. The common types of interventions implemented were

- fun days
- taster sessions
- weekly football, multi-sports, aerobics, dance (including liaison with StreetDance projects) and gym sessions
- walking groups
- CSLA and other accreditation for staff and clients,
- staff physical activity
- events to celebrate achievement

Children’s play activities were also included in some Children’s Centres in order to encourage young parents to exercise alongside their children. In addition CtG supported staff at the partner organisations when applying for funding, provided information booklets and directories about local sport and physical activity provision (including local StreetGames projects), signposted staff and young people to local clubs and facilities, provided specialist equipment, arranged for teams to be involved in sporting competition and continued to advise after the intervention period had ended. On occasions externally paid coaches were used to supplement staffing levels in order to sustain an activity.

The success of the interventions was evident from the responses gathered from the final stage EFQMs with senior and management staff at all the partner organisations. Staff and young people felt they had improved their knowledge and ability to lead sessions and were interacting better. Inclusiveness was a central facet to the sessions and, as a result, young people with disabilities and mental health problems were all able to benefit.

“Changes YP put a team into the early intervention football tournament in the summer which consisted of staff and young people that proved to be a turning point for a number of our members. We would never have done it without the support from CtG. We were the only team with female members and we came last but the feeling of accomplishment at the end was amazing. The feeling of team spirit that the Programme Champion instilled is infectious. It has really changed the way a lot of young people view the service. Some people who you would never have considered to be sporty are really enjoying being more active and have started doing things independently”. (Changes YP Team Leader)

At all the projects a CtG Programme Champion was identified to liaise with young people, staff and volunteers and to lead the establishment of more physical activity. A Sports Champion, drawn from the partner organisation, was also appointed and was responsible for encouraging participation and supporting the development of sport and physical activities in a sustainable way. A range of staff were encouraged to get involved either by enabling young people to attend or to participate alongside them. Some staff only activities were also facilitated or run by CtG staff in the belief that, if staff and volunteers were active and understood the benefits, they were more likely to be positive role models and to encourage their clients to also participate. All the partner organisations were encouraged to use a greater number of volunteers to support their sport and physical activity provision and to ensure they were adequately trained. A series of celebration days were held to allow young people, staff, volunteers, parents and other significant others to recognise the achievements gained during the projects. A table outlining the interventions introduced at each partner organisation is available in Appendix E.

Outcomes

The CtG project did exactly what we wanted it to do. In fact it went further. We didn't expect it to be sustainable so quickly. We need more volunteers but this is something we are working on. There will always be a need for sport and physical activity here as it is an ideal tool to use with dysfunctional families. Our goals and targets are more about self esteem and confidence and I believe that all targets were met and the sessions did exactly what we had hoped they would. (Senior IFSU staff)

It is apparent that CtG was able to facilitate a significant cultural change towards the way sport and physical activity is both viewed and utilised at 13 out of the 16 projects included in this report. The recognition by staff and volunteers that sport and physical activity could help them achieve their wider aims was a key part of establishing provision and developing sustainability.

<p><i>“FSC has changed a lot of the work it does and it does have a lot to do with our partnership with CtG. We are now actively encouraging working with young people through sport. The organisation has changed enormously from four years ago. I think this partnership has helped us make this journey”. (FSC Regional Manager)</i></p>	<p><i>“There is an increased awareness of the importance of sport and physical activity. CtG has demonstrated links between sport and physical activity and other outcomes that we wouldn’t have recognised before”. (Kingsland Children’s Centre Manager)</i></p>
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Where the host organisation’s staff were supportive and enthusiastic partners of CtG, the successful establishment of sporting activities and increased participation levels was possible. By the end of the intervention sport and physical activities were sustainable at all the successful interventions. For details of what each partner organisation was implementing please refer to Appendix F.

The success of the CtG intervention can be illustrated by the extension of some of their work. During the Compendium Regeneration intervention, CtG staff successfully established Saturday mixed sports sessions and this doorstep community approach alerted staff to the potential of the national StreetGames project. The Stoke-on-Trent StreetGames project received £270,000 of funding and 45 sessions a week across the City were subsequently arranged, supported by paid coaches and a number of Area Implementation Teams. The successful Dads’ football sessions also led to similar work elsewhere. They were recognised by both Staffordshire Football Association and a Football Development Officer from a neighbouring local authority as being a valuable way of interacting with young men and, following matches between Children’s Centres from both Burton and Stoke-on-Trent, it is hoped that the format will be adopted in Burton. As a consequence of working with FSC the city wide Community Sports Volunteer Scheme was developed and this has proved extremely successful, not least for volunteers developed across the interventions CtG has been involved with. About 60 volunteers are currently registered and they work in a wide variety of physical activity and sport sessions across Stoke-on-Trent.

Less success had been achieved at Hope Children’s Centre and at NSREC, CAFAG and YIP the projects had not been taken any further than starting a few interventions. This was a result of very high staff turnover, a lack of available staff and other resources to support the project and, in the case of NSREC and YIP, the closing of these services. These interventions were also some of the first partners to work with CtG and lessons were learnt by CtG with regards to improving communication, overseeing the work of Programme Champions from a central office and ensuring

management and staff at the partner organisations fully understood the aims of the project.

Based on the findings of the final stage research that CtG carried out, significant improvements were seen in participation levels, understanding and the value placed on sport and physical activity at all the successful projects.

A summary of the main outcomes are as follows:

- Sport proved a successful tool to use with young people displaying challenging behaviour and at risk of exclusion from education, those living with mental and physical disabilities, young people in residential care and individuals responsible for dependents;
- Links between sport and physical activity and the provision's wider aims were understood by managers and staff, often for the first time. It was expressed by managers that this level of understanding would not have been achieved without the CtG intervention;
- Sport and physical activity was now more formally recognised as part of the provision and staff were encouraged by management to take it into consideration when planning activities and to recognise its worth;
- Several of the partner organisations established a member of staff as the lead for this area of provision whilst others appointed a new member of staff to maintain activities facilitated by CtG and to develop provision further;
- Staff members were now able to lead sessions, including in some cases CSLA courses. Individual staff showed they now had sufficient knowledge and understanding to amend sessions as required, develop partnerships to ensure greater provision was available and support participation by the young people they were working with;
- Many of the young people's views towards sport and physical activity changed significantly during the intervention. They reported increased opportunities to participate, often in a wider range of activities and in what was perceived as a safe, inclusive and supportive environment;
- Staff and volunteers reported that participation in sport and physical activity had had a direct impact on the behaviour of some of the challenging young people they worked with. Confidence, social interaction, anger management, determination, a sense of fun and aspirations were all reported to have been improved by participation in organised sessions;
- Physical activities provided an avenue for young people to achieve in non academic routes. This was particularly important when they were no longer attending school or failed to do so regularly;
- Staff participation, alongside the young people, allowed staff to witness positive behaviour and improve working relationships with their clients.
- Young people spoke of improved physical and mental health, including a reduction in stress and isolation;
- Dads' football was particularly successful at three of the Children's Centres in encouraging more males to access the service. In addition weekly football sessions for boys and young men were the most popular activity at many of the partner organisations and allowed staff to develop a better working relationship with this difficult to reach group;

- Across the interventions sport is now seen as providing something additional to the provision. It is recognised as an alternative way of reaching out to young people and as a useful way of persuading them to access the service;
- Although activity rates were lower for females across the interventions, girls and young women did participate in some of the multi-sport sessions. Aerobics classes provided positive feedback and weekly netball was also welcomed. Some females joined in mixed football sessions whilst girls only football was developed in partnership with local schools and ultimately the FA Development Officer. The success of this project led to the establishment of a Coaching Development Centre;
- Dance was also welcomed by some girls and young women who participated in StreetDance programmes, either set up specifically to cater for the partner organisation or in existing wider projects in Stoke-on-Trent.
- Increased confidence and knowledge of what is available in the local areas has resulted in participation opportunities for young people in activities organised by StreetGames, StreetDance and StreetCheer;
- Several partner organisations have established teams to compete in leagues or festivals organised in the wider community and young people are being successfully signposted to local clubs and facilities;
- Funding was achieved with the help of CtG staff at many of the partner organisations during the projects, ensuring that specialist equipment, kit and training could be purchased.

Conclusions

“The involvement that we had with Closing the Gap has enriched the structure that we have in place for sports and physical activities. Through staff training and the Champions at each session, it has helped to introduce more of a variety to the activities that we previously planned or the Clubs / groups by helping staff members to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to maintain this. Closing the Gap has helped the Young Carers Department to source new venues for groups and helped us to re-look at the methods used to employ new staff and future project proposals. The Closing the Gap team have had a very positive impact on Young Carers and staff alike.”(NSYC Senior Staff member)

Closing the Gap took place within the context of greater government support for a range of interventions expected to improve the health of the nation. It is evident from the data collected for the CtG baseline figures that all target groups had dramatic improvements in their participation rates between 2006 and 2009. It is not possible to argue that CtG was solely responsible for this, however it can be assumed that they contributed significantly. The CtG intervention targeted the “at risk” groups directly and worked with large numbers of staff and hard to reach young people. The intervention was focussed on establishing sustainable cultural change and facilitating

greater sport and physical activity provision. Whilst many of the partner organisations were receptive to the CtG message as a result of government aims, they were not able to deliver services in this area due to a lack of knowledge and understanding about the ways that sport and physical activity could be used to meet the wider aims of their organisation and their clients. By working with CtG, partner organisations were able to adapt their approach, access training and funding opportunities and incorporate sport and physical activity successfully. For example, baseline data shows that, on average, females participate the same amount as males, which is in contrast to the national trend. CtG can take some credit for the equal participation rates due to the large numbers of females that are targeted through the partner organisations, the level of skill team members have towards encouraging young females and offering a wide range of activities such as StreetDance and aerobics to suit their needs⁽⁷⁾.

In most of the interventions it took some time for staff to recognise the benefits of sport and physical activity and the perseverance of the Programme Champion has been crucial to the successful completion of the projects. At all the successful interventions a new culture of physical activity was established and this was reflected in the staff's increasing role in providing physical activities for their clients and also in their own involvement in more sport. Sustainability of some of the activities was evident from the final stage BBaCs and EFQMs and from the diaries and reports submitted by CtG coaching staff and Programme Champions.

The benefits of volunteers, staff and young people was clear as it allowed partner organisations to run their own sessions and young people to develop leadership and organisational skills. Recognised qualifications were gained leading, in some cases, to volunteer and paid employment opportunities. The fact that staff and young people often participated together in training and other leisure sessions meant that relationships between the two groups often improved.

“The ‘Using Sport as a Tool’ training helped young carers’ staff to gain the skills/ knowledge and more importantly to lead a wider variety of sports activities at their clubs / group. This has been extremely beneficial because it has helped staff to build positive relationships with young carers and be a positive role model through their own participation. The training also helped the Department to recognise skills and experience that the team members have that could be utilised during sessions. Besides this, the training itself was enjoyed by all and was a wonderful day for team building.” (NSYC, Senior Staff Member)

It has proved important that CtG kept in contact with the partner organisations after formal intervention work was completed and that on-going support was given in areas of information and training opportunities. For their part the partner

organisations must strive to gain leadership and ownership of activities established at their provision and remain committed to sustainability of services facilitated by CtG.

“CtG came along two years ago and there has been a definite improvement in this area with regards to the social aspect; I mean people wanting to take part, people wanting to have a voice. We have got generations of mindsets to change in this part of Stoke ... and in Bentilee the people are quite hard to work with, but there has definitely been a change, an improvement. I think the physical activity since (the Programme Champion has been here) over the last two years has improved the channels of communications with the community. He can do an aerobics session and start talking about something far more serious because they are relaxed, they're having fun ...” (Treehouse Children's Centre Deputy Manager)

At the end of the intervention period the majority of staff and young people were enthusiastic about maintaining the use of sport and physical activity in their work because

- The inclusive and fun environment allows young people of all abilities and experience to participate, learning new skills;
- It's an invaluable tool in creating positive relationships between staff, volunteers, young people and the wider community;
- It contributes to a feeling of community, particularly through the development of fun days and via the facilitation of teams made up of young people from the local area;
- It helps to increase confidence and self esteem and to translate this confidence to their lives as a whole
- It has provided an avenue for staff to gain additional skills that can be used to benefit the young people they work with;
- It has allowed the development of new partnerships that can be used to increase the amount of provision for young people;
- The CSLA and CSLA Tutor Training has enabled young people, volunteers and staff to develop transferable personal and professional skills;
- It develops young people's knowledge about healthy lifestyles and their recognition that sport and physical activity can be fun;
- It develops physical and social skills in young people;
- It helps to improve participation rates for all family members and can encourage parents to exercise with their children;
- It provides an alternative avenue for young men to become involved in volunteer programmes;
- It helps to encourage socially isolated young people to leave their homes and attend available provision;

- It encourages interaction with the wider community and can develop independence;
- It provides an avenue for achievement, empowerment and self control over one aspect of the clients' lives;
- Young people, staff and volunteers have expressed how much better they feel after becoming physically active and how participation helps them to manage their mental health difficulties;
- It can successfully challenge pre-conceptions about what the young people accessing the partner organisations could participate in and raises expectations of staff, volunteers, parents and young people;
- It helps organisations to work together, develop partnerships and share good practice and resources;
- It makes an organisation more attractive to referrals and helps to promote their work;
- It contributes to positive life choices being made by young mothers and workless households;
- It allows the discussion of wider aims and sensitive cultural issues to be discussed via the informal environment of sport;
- It illustrates strengths and weaknesses within an organisation and allows them to develop future policies, strategies and budgets to include sport and physical activity.

In conclusion significant improvements of participation amongst young people at risk of social exclusion in Stoke-on-Trent have been recorded in CtG research. In addition positive interaction between staff and young people has been achieved and anti-social behavior has been seen to decrease. Ensuring sustainability is essential if successful partnerships are to be achieved and, whilst CtG cannot take sole credit for the positive outcomes, the figures clearly illustrate that this intervention is a beneficial method to employ. Closing the Gap has evidently been a much needed and successful programme in Stoke-on-Trent. It was a unique approach taken by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and has established the Closing the Gap programme as an example of best practice for any organisation striving to achieve social inclusion through sport and physical activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SERVICES WORKING WITH HARD TO REACH AND SOCIALLY EXCLUDED YOUNG PEOPLE

The analysis of data collected to evaluate the CtG interventions with partner organisations has highlighted some useful recommendations for other service providers in similar sectors. These should provide some guidance for similar projects

1. That each project is treated as a separate case study and whilst good practice can be transferred it is not possible to generalise about the needs of young people. As a result the same intervention work cannot simply be reproduced and instead it is crucial that a Programme Champion works with staff, volunteers and young people to assess the particular needs of the clients at each organisation;
2. That sport and physical activity should be incorporated into the provision offered to children and young people that access support services and that it is considered as an effective tool where the quality of staff relationships with young people is important;
3. That the potential of sport and physical activity continues to be recognised and a variety of sessions are offered to encourage participation of all clients, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity;
4. It has been our experience that sport and physical activity sessions provide a relaxed environment where clients feel able to open up and discuss more serious issues. Talking in an informal setting can increase the trust between staff and service users and this level of engagement can improve the quality of the relationship between client and staff members;
5. It has been our experience that young peoples' motivation to participate is closely linked to the quality of relationships that they have with the staff that work with them, as a result their motivation has grown considerably as the quality of these relationships has improved. Participation in sport & physical activity programmes has provided an excellent mechanism to help develop the strength of this relationship;
6. That appropriate crèche and childcare support is provided to allow young parents and teenage mothers to participate in more sport and physical activities;
7. That the importance of sport and physical activity arranged by the organisation itself is recognised as widening participation. This is partly due to financial restrictions and also young people's reluctance to go elsewhere without support;
8. That young people are more likely to access local facilities if support is offered by staff;
9. That young people should be empowered to participate in the planning of sport and physical activity programmes;
10. That staff and volunteers are given the opportunity to undergo relevant training in order to provide a range of activities and sustain a high quality of provision;
11. That staff training is focused on whenever a new sport or physical activity intervention is developed;

12. Hold regular meetings and provide consistent points of contact at all levels with individuals who are able to ensure the co-ordination of sport and physical activity interventions;
13. Make sure that systems are developed and utilised to ensure that all staff are both initially fully briefed about interventions and remain so throughout the whole process.
14. That partnerships are developed to ensure good practice is shared and resources are made available
15. That partnerships are made with other local organisations working with difficult to reach young people, in order to reduce costs, share good practice and to improve participation opportunities for young people.

OBSERVATIONS OF INTEREST TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS

1. Physical activity and sport can provide a relaxed environment in which a wide range of more serious topics can be discussed with clients and relationships between staff and clients strengthened.
2. To establish a culture of physical activity, as demonstrated in this paper, is a time consuming process that took over a year. The CtG staff resources were crucial to this process and their continuing support, albeit on a more informal basis in most cases, is essential for the long term sustainability of the activities.
3. A consistent core CtG team and the trust that can be developed between clients, staff, volunteers and the CtG workers is essential to developing the sport and physical activity programme.
4. It must be remembered at all times that sport and physical activity is a tool to achieving the wider objectives of the partner organisation and all sessions must be planned and evaluated accordingly. A 'sport for sports sake' approach is not appropriate and will not help the intervention to become embedded in the everyday work of the organisation.
5. Appropriate qualifications and experience for staff and volunteers are essential to maintain sustainability. Costs need to be kept to a minimum and activities publicised better to people in the local area, who may well start to access the venues through the attraction of sport and physical activity sessions.
6. Working to bring about significant cultural change can bring significant satisfaction to the staff leading the intervention programme and can extend their professional and personal skills. In particular, transferable skills and development of good practice can be used in future work with other organisations. In this way, the partnership can be a learning experience for all involved in the programme and can be a positive process for the organisation leading the intervention, as well as the one who is being supported.
7. Funding restrictions are recognised and partnerships with other local sports and physical activity facilities are essential if good practice and resources are to be fully utilised in this sector of provision.
8. Not all local authorities have an identified sports development officer. However, it is recognised that this resource would only add to any intervention programme and would allow the steps taken to be further extended once the intervention has been completed.

Further Reading

More detail on the CtG interventions are available via an in-depth evaluation report that provides evidence from the 16 projects included in this Executive Summary.

There are also individual evaluations written for each of these projects, although it should be noted that there is a single report covering CAFAG, NSREC and YIP.

Participation Rates for Sport and Physical Activity by Young People at Risk of Social Exclusion in Stoke-on-Trent.

This presents the baseline participation figures that were collected in 2006 and 2009 by CtG. The report includes information relating to all the “at risk” groups targeted by the intervention project and provides evidence of improved participation rates. The impact of CtG is also considered in this document.

All of the above publications can be obtained from Andrew Heaward, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, City of Stoke-on-Trent, Swift House 'A' Upper Basement, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HP or andrew.heaward@stoke.gov.uk

Appendix A Organisations Closing the Gap has worked with that are included in this evaluation report

Host organisation	Date intervention started	Date intervention ended
Social Care Residential Units for Looked After Children and Young People - Pilot Project	May 2005	December 2006
Federation of Stadium Communities	January 2006	July 2009
Treehouse Children's Centre	May 2006	January 2008
Compendium Housing Association and the Regeneration Project in Coalville	May 2006	November 2008
North Staffs Young Carers	October 2006	March 2008
Kingsland Children's Centre	October 2006	December 2008
Crescent Children's Centre	October 2006	February 2009
Blackfriars Day Centre	November 2006	January 2008
The Hope Children's Centre	January 2007	May 2009
Integrated Family Support Unit	June 2007	November 2008
Nacro Services	June 2008	August 2009
Groundwork Stoke	September 2008	October 2009
Changes	November 2008	November 2009
Chell Area Family Action Group, Stanfields and Meir Youth Inclusion Project and North Staffordshire Racial Equality Council	All started May 2006	Not completed.

Appendix B All organizations CtG has worked with.

1. Staffordshire University Students Union
2. Youth Offending Services
3. Shelton Day Centre
4. Riverside Training (Adult Social Care)
5. Treehouse Children's Centre
6. Crescent Children's Centre
7. Kingslands Children's Centre
8. Blackfriars Day Centre
9. Integrated Family Support Unit
10. Brighter Futures
11. Further Options
12. Project Management
13. Bucknall Police
14. Tunstall Police
15. Bucknall Early Intervention Team
16. Stokes Young Peoples Team (leaving care)
17. Changes YP
18. Unity
19. Nacro
20. Groundwork
21. Coalville Residents Association (Compendium)
22. Hope Children's Centre
23. Swann Bank Methodist Church
24. Youth Services (disability work)
25. North Staffordshire Young Carers
26. Wallace Sport and Education Centre
27. North Staffordshire Racial Equality Council
28. Federation of Stadium Communities –Port Vale Initiative
29. Norsaca
30. Galaxy
31. Newford Residents Association
32. Hanley YMCA
33. Young Peoples Social Care - residential units
34. Crossroads
35. Stansfield & Meir Youth Inclusion Project
36. Queensberry Youth Club
37. CAFAG

Evaluations done.

Incomplete

Partnerships not projects

Projects not ready for evaluation when this report was written

Appendix C

Site Reference
(Do not complete)



Staff Survey

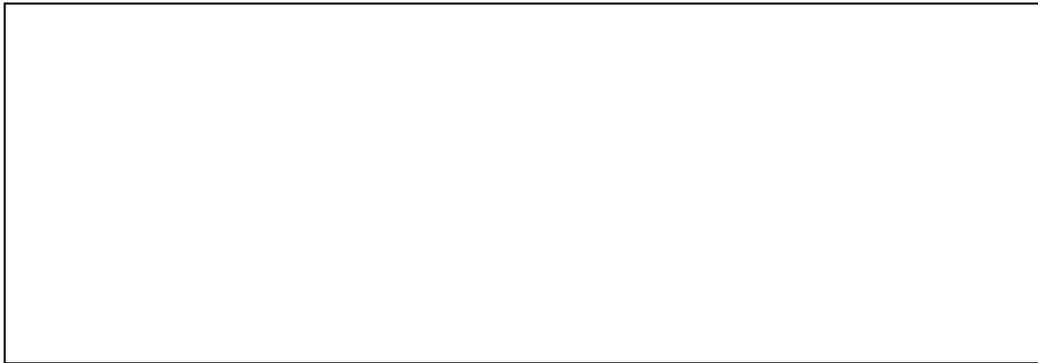
Please complete the following five short questions as fully as possible. This process will then allow us to understand the context in which both you and the young people you work with currently experience sport & physical activity.

All responses are anonymous and will only be used for the purposes of the Closing the Gap programme

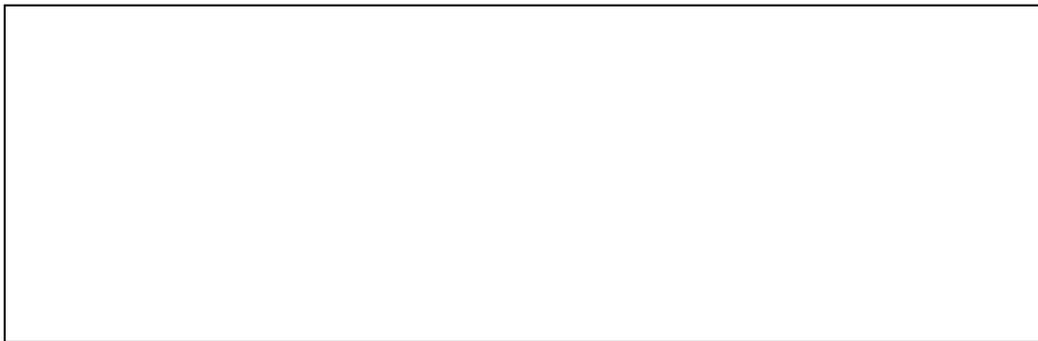
1. What do you think about sport and physical activity and why?

2. Are there any barriers currently limiting your involvement in sport and physical activity?

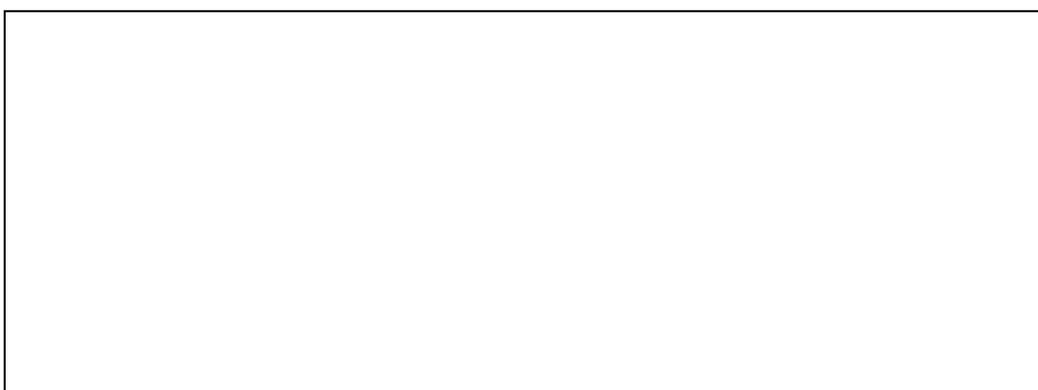
3. Do you think sport and physical activity can play a role in achieving your day to day work objectives?



4. What currently limits your ability to use sport and physical activity as part of your day today work?



5. In your opinion what could be done to reduce these barriers?



Appendix D

EFQM Based Questionnaire: Organisational Assessment

Key: Sport*= sport and active recreation

1. Leadership

- 1a. Project workers interact with YOUNG PEOPLE about sport*
- 1b. Management structure promotes a culture of engaging YOUNG PEOPLE in sport*
- 1c. Management structure identifies and champions organisational change

2. Policy and Strategy

- 2a. Policy and strategy are in places that are aimed at engaging YOUNG PEOPLE in sport*
- 2b. Policy and strategy are based on information from research, learning and external activities regarding YOUNG PEOPLE and sport*
- 2c. Policy and strategy regarding YOUNG PEOPLE and sport*, are developed, reviewed and updated
- 2d. Policies and strategies (relating to the above) are communicated and deployed through a framework of key processes
- 2e. Ownership of policies and strategies (relating to the above) are clear and defined

3. People

- 3a. People resources are planned, managed and improved toward engaging YOUNG PEOPLE in sport*
- 3b. People's knowledge and competencies (regarding YOUNG PEOPLE and sport*) are identified, developed and sustained
- 3c. People are involved in policies and strategies, and their delivery, regarding YOUNG PEOPLE and sport*
- 3d. People and the organisation communicate these policies and strategies
- 3e. YP involvement as volunteers
- 3f. No of volunteers involved in facilitating sport *

4. Partnerships and Resources

- 4a. External partnerships are managed to increase the participation of YOUNG PEOPLE in sport*

5. Processes

- 5a. Processes are systematically designed and managed to increase the participation of YOUNG PEOPLE in sport*
- 5b. Processes are improved, as needed, to increase the participation of YOUNG PEOPLE in sport*

5c. Processes are designed and developed based on YP needs and expectations

5d. Processes are evaluated and improved as needed

6. Customer Results

6a. YP perceptions toward sport* are measured

6b. YOUNG PEOPLE show positive results engaging in sport*

6c. Young people are involved in shaping provision

7. Society Results

7a. Society, (YOUNG PEOPLE families, support workers etc) perceptions are being measured

7b. YP representative perceptions are being measured

7c. Society results are showing positive trends

8. Key performance Results

8a. Key performance outcomes are defined in regard to YOUNG PEOPLE and sport*

8b. KPIs are monitored, evaluated and inform policy development

9. Problem Identification

9a. Young people are informed that lack of physical activity is a problem

9b. Young people are offered sport* based solutions (to address physical activity)

Appendix E

Mechanism carried out by CtG	Host organisation
Dads' football ¹	Treehouse, Crescent, Hope
Football sessions ²	Treehouse, Compendium, Nacro, FSC, YIP, IFSU
Football sessions for girls	FSC
Multi sport and physical activity sessions ³ for young people (including taster sessions)	Treehouse, Crescent, Groundwork, Kingsland, Blackfriars, IFSU, Changes, Groundwork, Compendium, NSYC, Nacro, SCRU, FSC, YIP
Dance for young people	Changes, NSREC
Parent and child activity groups	Treehouse, Crescent, Hope, NSREC
Aerobics for young people	Crescent, Kingsland, Hope
Gym sessions	Kingsland, Changes, SCRU,
Walking Sessions	Kingsland, Changes, Crescent
Liaison with Street Games	Groundwork, FSC
Liaison with Street Dance ⁴	Crescent, Kingsland, IFSU, Changes, Groundwork, Nacro
Young People training and achievement accreditation ⁵	Changes, IFSU, Groundwork, NSYC, Nacro, FSC, NSREC, Treehouse, Crescent, Blackfriars, Changes, Compendium
Staff activities ⁶	Treehouse, Kingsland
Staff & volunteer training ⁷	NSREC, Treehouse, SCRU, IFSU, FSC, Blackfriars, Changes, Kingsland, Groundwork, NSYC, Nacro, Crescent
Development of Volunteers	YIP, Blackfriars, IFSU, FSC, Nacro, Compendium, Groundwork, Crescent, Treehouse, Changes
Fun Days, Open Days & Sports Festivals	Treehouse, Crescent, Kingsland, IFSU, NSYC, CAFAG, YIP, NSREC, Nacro,

¹ Football at Hope Children's Centre was organised as a dads' football group but became a session for young men in general.

² Whilst many of these sessions were open to males and females, in reality few girls joined the group.

³ Multi sport sessions differed from venue to venue and detail of each intervention can be found in the individual reports written for each organisation. However they included cricket, basketball, football, badminton, kwik cricket, dodgeball, tennis, rounders, athletics, indoor bowls, various forms of tag, obstacle courses, relays, handball, netball, parachute games, boules, a range of physical games, drills, dance, table tennis, ten pin bowling, circuits, basketball & shuttle runs.

⁴ The Street Dance sessions at SCRU were Street Jazz.

⁵ Young people were involved in CSLA courses, Football Coaching Awards, First Aid courses and a range of awards from the Stoke Be Healthy programme, run by Stoke City Council. At NSREC the CSLA undertaken was an amended dance CSLA.

⁶ Staff activities differed but they included netball, step aerobics, aerobics, and gym sessions.

⁷ Staff training sessions were usually CSLA Level 1 and 2 courses & CSLA Tutor courses. In addition some staff achieved Football Coaching Awards and, at Changes, a Dance CSLA. At NSYC, staff took part in a 'Sport as a Tool for Working with Young People' and 'Introduction to Sport' courses. SCRU staff also carried out the latter of these two. With the exception of the FA courses, all sessions were run by CtG. At YIP, a staff CSLA was organised but did not happen due to the intervention ending.

	Groundwork, Changes, Compendium
Energise Cards ⁸ / reduced costs negotiated	Kingsland, Nacro, NSREC, Changes, Groundwork, NSYC, Treehouse
Sports Directories and Sports Packs	Blackfriars, IFSU, SCRUI, Changes, Nacro, Crescent,
Celebration Days	Blackfriars, SCRUI, IFSU, Groundwork, NSYC
Involvement of teams in local competitions and sports festivals	Changes, Crescent, Treehouse, Hope, SCRUI, IFSU, Nacro, Crescent
CtG support with funding bids	Blackfriars, Changes, FSC, NSREC, Groundwork, Compendium, Hope, Crescent
Action Plan ⁹	YIP, CAFAG, NSREC, SCRUI, IFSU, Groundwork, Treehouse, Blackfriars, Changes, FSC, Hope, Compendium, NSYC, Nacro, Crescent
Staff Audit	Compendium, NSYC, Crescent
Production of a Sports Policy	NSYC, Groundwork, Nacro

⁸ Before Energise cards were offered, the scheme was known as Recreation Key Cards.

⁹ The Action Plan for CAFAG & NSREC was a draft one as the intervention did not get as far as the host organisation agreeing it.

APPENDIX F

Outcome Achieved	Partner Organisation
Culture of Sport and Physical Activity embedded	Crescent, Treehouse & Kingsland Children's Centres, Nacro, IFSU, Groundwork, Changes YP, NSYC, SCRUI, Blackfriars Day Centre, Compendium & Coalville Resident's Association
Sports and Physical Activity Policies	Hope Children's Centre, FSC, NSYC, Changes YP, IFSU, Blackfriars Day Centre, SCRUI, Groundwork
Staff and volunteers sports and physical activity skills audit	NSYC, Crescent Children's Centre
Young people evaluation and feedback procedures feeding into planning	Compendium, NSYC, Nacro, Changes YP, Treehouse Children's Centre, IFSU, SCRUI, Blackfriars Day Centre
Links or signposting young people to Street Dance, Street Games or Street Cheer Projects	Crescent Children's Centre, Kingsland Children's Centre, Groundwork, Compendium,
Young dads' football group	Crescent & Treehouse Children's Centre
Young peoples' football groups	Nacro, Treehouse & Crescent Children's Centre, IFSU,
Young women only football	FSC
Aerobics for young people ¹⁰	Hope Children's Centre, Kingsland Children's Centre Crescent Children's Centre ¹¹
Aerobics for staff	
Other regular sport and physical activity sessions (including multi sports and fun days)	NSYC, FSC, Groundwork, Crescent, Treehouse & Kingsland Children's Centre, Compendium, Changes YP, Blackfriars Day Centre, SCRUI,
Walking sessions	Treehouse, Crescent, Kingsland & Hope Children's Centres, FSC, Changes YP,
Young people accessing external facilities	SCRUI, Treehouse Children's Centre, Changes YP, Blackfriars Day Centre
Educational information about benefits of sport and physical activity	Treehouse & Crescent Children's Centre, Changes YP
Development of volunteers	Crescent Children's Centre, FSC, IFSU, Changes YP, Nacro, Groundwork, Treehouse, Kingsland & Crescent Children's Centre, Changes YP, Blackfriars Day Centre
Funding achieved / budget provided by the partner organisation	Compendium, Blackfriars Day Centre, SCRUI, FSC, Hope, Crescent and

¹⁰ This had been established at Kingsland Children's Centre prior to the CtG work.

¹¹ Known as Keep Fit at Crescent Children's Centre

	Treehouse Children's Centre, Nacro
CSLA qualified young people, staff and / or volunteers	Hope Children's Centre, FSC, Nacro, Groundwork, Blackfriars Day Centre, Changes YP,
CSLA Tutor qualified staff and / or volunteers ¹²	Groundwork, Nacro, Changes YP, IFSU, Blackfriars Day Centre
FA coaching qualified young people, staff and / or volunteers ¹³	Nacro, Crescent, Compendium, Nacro, IFSU,
Additional qualifications achieved by young people and / or staff	Groundwork, Blackfriars Day Centre, Nacro, Changes YP, IFSU, Blackfriars Day Centre, SCRUI
Improved understanding and / or participation by staff	FSC, Compendium, NSYC, Kingsland & Treehouse Children's Centre, IFSU, Groundwork, Changes YP, Blackfriars Day Centre, SCRUI
Improved understanding and / or participation by young people	FSC, Compendium, NSYC, Nacro, Groundwork, Treehouse Children's Centre, Changes YP, IFSU, Blackfriars Day Centre, SCRUI

¹² Funding had been awarded to Coalville's Residents Association for training for volunteers in CSLA.

¹³ Funding had been awarded to Coalville's Residents Association for training for volunteers in FA Level 1 qualifications

References

All the evidence discussed in this report is drawn from the individual evaluation reports written for each of the partner organisations.

1. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2009), cited in *Participation Rates for Sport and Physical Activity by Young People at Risk of Social Exclusion in Stoke-on-Trent*, CtG, Stoke City Council, 2010.
2. Sport England (2009), op cit.
3. Stoke-on-Trent Health Profile (2009), Green Paper (2009), Physical Activity Floor Action Plan (2008), op cit.
4. CtG (November 2009) *Participation Rates for Sport and Physical Activity by Young People at Risk of Social Exclusion in Stoke-on-Trent*, op cit.
5. Suckling, S. Ryan P. Dent M (2005) *Beliefs, Barriers and Control: An Alternative Methodology for Measuring Urban Regeneration. International Dilemma's Conference, University of East London.*
6. For more information on the Every Child Matters policy details and guidance on implementation and emerging practice see <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters> (assessed 6/05/10)
7. For more detail on these issues see *Participation Rates for Sport and Physical Activity by Young People at Risk of Social Exclusion in Stoke-on-Trent*, op cit.