Transformative role of sport

- Sport and physical activity continue to be associated with delivering a range of benefits for individuals and for the communities where these individuals live.

- The transformative role of sport is characterised by a belief that sport can build confidence at the individual level whilst also developing strong community links more widely. Through providing opportunities for individuals to engage in social activities, gain a range of experiences and develop life skills, sport offers opportunities for participants to experience first-hand positive experiences including teamwork, achievement, meeting challenges and being a winner.

- It is also argued that those who engage in sport will develop ‘a feel for the game’, which translates into interpersonal skills which are thought to enhance social interaction and social exchange (Scrambler, 2005).

- The evidence base which underpins these claims is frequently characterised as inconclusive. This is due in part to poor or unsystematic monitoring and evaluation processes within which causal effects are not established (Coalter et al 2000, Long et al 2002, Coalter, 2007). This highlights the need to develop a deeper and more complex understanding of which outcomes are realised, by whom and under what circumstances.

- Any learning resulting from engagement in sport and physical activity must be transferable to a much wider range of situations if any transformative aims are to be realised.

- Sandford et al (2006) recommend that the significance of social relationships and the creation of a sense of community are prioritised. They also stress the importance of employing a multi-agency approach and state that sustainability structures should be built in alongside credible monitoring and evaluation processes.

'It is not necessarily the specific nature or physical goals of a programme that are most significant, but the learning processes inherent in them’ (Sandford et al (2006:p. 260)
Sport, Community Safety and Young People in Disadvantaged Communities

- The government’s five-year crime prevention strategy (Home Office, 2015) emphasised the role of community safety partnerships (CSPs) in addressing crime in local communities, and particularly in disadvantaged communities or those with high levels of social exclusion.
- The government’s ten year strategy for young people introduced in 2007 (Department for Children, Families and Schools/HM Treasury, 2007), also emphasised the role of sport and other positive activities for young people in reducing involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour and improving attainment.
- CSPs foster closer working relationships between the police, health providers and local authorities (and other partners such as probation services).
- One of the priorities for community safety in addressing crime and anti-social behaviour through this kind of multi-agency working is the provision of youth sport and activities in local communities (Sport England, 2008).
- The Sport and Recreational Alliance identify four main ways in which sport can be utilised in order to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour:
  - Diversionary
  - As a ‘hook’ for other interventions and opportunities
  - Personal transformation and resultant behaviour modification through the activity itself (e.g. Outdoor Education)
  - Promotion of social inclusion

Learning from previous sport-based initiatives

Based on qualitative research with key stakeholders involved in the Positive Futures programme (a sports-based social inclusion programme) Kelly (2011) identified a number of issues that were relevant to future initiatives aiming to promote community safety through sport’s participation:

- Not all the activities were available to all young people because of the cost involved
- Whilst young people were given a voice within the projects this did not necessarily transfer to the wider context where young people were marginalized and did not therefore bring about any changes in structural inequalities
- The impact on employment was limited in reach and was often restricted to a small number of ‘case study’ young people
- As with other time-limited, resource constrained projects ‘measuring’ the impact of the programme was limited because of the complexity of capturing impact on individuals in the long term.
- There was limited attention paid to understanding the processes through which impact on young people occurs.
Terms such as ‘Social inclusion’ are variously defined locally and nationally which limits the usefulness of the evidence base as different stakeholders prioritise different evidence.

“Targeted intervention programmes are clearly unable to significantly impact on many of the processes serving to ‘exclude’ young people in neoliberal, post-industrial societies; at best, they can alleviate some of the consequences for a minority.” (Kelly, 2011)

**Gender, youth sport and youth crime**

The Youth Justice Board (2009) have published the following about girls and offending:

- A young female offender in England and Wales is most commonly White, most likely to receive their first Reprimand aged 13–15 years old and their first conviction aged 15–16 years old. Convicted girls typically have no previous convictions, and show a range of risk factors.

- Theft or handling stolen goods is the offence most frequently committed by girls in England and Wales is and this is congruent with the traditional pattern for female offenders.

- An offence of violence against the person is the offence committed by most girls in the youth justice system and this was a new trend.

- Whilst there is not a rise in the number of girls committing offences more girls are entering the youth justice system. Girls are also being convicted at a younger age.

- Asset analysis indicates that young female offenders in England and Wales can be placed into three overall groups, those who commit:
  - offences of theft and handling stolen goods
  - offences of violence
  - ‘other’ offences.

  The girls in each group present with a different range of needs and criminogenic factors.

- Violent offences by girls have a common pattern – usually involving a relationship with the victim and it is most often perceived that the victim did something to ‘deserve’ the violence. The use of alcohol is often linked to the offence/offending pattern.
Most offending is perpetrated by boys and interventions have been designed to meet their needs. The indications are that risk and protective factors are broadly similar for boys and girls, but that those for adult female offenders are different.

Little is currently known about ‘what works’ with girls in the youth justice system. Qualitative data indicates that girls prefer the building of one-to-one and a female-only environment, whereas boys prefer more structure and rules.

Much good work goes unshared or is unsustainable because it is reliant on the goodwill and energy of staff who deliver it in addition to their other tasks. Sustainability is a key issue in work with girls and for gender-specific social return on investment and youth crime

- Social Return on Investment analysis (SROI) is a form of cost benefit analysis. Projects are evaluated based on whether they are considered to be good value for money, as the costs of a programme are reviewed against the value of the outcomes that occurred as a result of the programme.
- SROI is not concerned only with financial considerations - it also attempts to account for social, environmental and economic costs and benefits.

SROI has been utilised within the UK and beyond to examine the cost effectiveness of sports-based youth crime initiatives as a means of addressing the concerns around the weakness in the existing evidence base to support the claims made for sport and youth-crime reduction.

- In 2010, New Philanthropy Capital examined three programmes, Kickz, The Boxing Academy and 2nd Chance. As a result they conclude that every £1 invested in Kickz resulted in £7 for every £1 value created for the state and the local community. They stated that a large proportion of the savings arise from savings to the victims of youth and gang violence that used to be common in the area.

“Our analysis shows that when sport is used as part of a wider programme of education and support, it can be highly effective at tackling youth crime, and can provide excellent value for money. Given the huge costs associated with youth crime, there is a compelling case for government and other funders to support such projects.”

New Philanthropy Capital
**Theoretical context**

Criminological theories are often absent in the development of individual programmes but as table A shows, these theories can be useful for the planning and delivery of sport and youth crime projects.

*Table A: Criminological theory and the development of sport and youth crime projects*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEORY</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
<th>IMPLICATIONS FOR DOORSTEP SPORT PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labelling theory</td>
<td>Involvement in the offending system can apply ‘offender labels’ to children and confirm delinquency.</td>
<td>• Integration of young people into doorstep sport sessions which are not labelled/named as reducing youth crime/ASB can avoid this labelling and stigma.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Positive experiences at doorstep sport sessions give young people the opportunity to view themselves and their lives differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Adults have the opportunity to view young people more positively in a different setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social bonding theory</td>
<td>Social bonds and relationships can enforce moral standards and deter young people from offending behaviour. There are four elements: Family, Institutions, Involvement in activities, Belief in the importance of these elements by the young person</td>
<td>• Young people have the opportunity to create positive bonds with adults such as the project manager, coaches and volunteers whilst being involved in sport sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• In some instances, a project staff member might become a ‘significant adult’ for a young person and support them to make different decisions and change their behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Young people have the opportunity to develop positive bonds with other participants and create new friendship groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• A young person’s engagement with other agencies through sport can help to develop a wider personal network.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Wider social networks can contribute to increasing a young person’s social capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social learning theory</td>
<td>People learn through observing others and then initiate these behaviours, both positively and negatively.</td>
<td>• Rules in sports sessions can help some young people to develop self-discipline, especially around aggression and violence.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Project staff can be seen by young people as positive role models.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Tensions and conflicts in sports sessions can be used by project staff to model positive ways of dealing with conflict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effectiveness of approach

Community-based sport and youth crime projects often work with young people in the first two stages of the offending pathway, namely, early prevention and targeted support, often leaving custody and resettlement to more specialist projects. Evaluation of community-based sport and youth crime projects have identified the following key elements summarised in Table B below:

Table B: Key elements of an effective sport and youth crime project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY ELEMENTS</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTIC OF APPROACH</th>
<th>LINK TO REALISING AMBITION PROGRAMME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Experienced, dedicated project delivery staff | • Experienced and preferably with a youth work background  
• Personal commitment to the session by the lead coach, preferably on a long term basis  
• Able to establish rapport with young people  
• Role model  
• Understand the wider role of the session  
• Able to work in partnership with other agencies | • The intervention is delivered by qualified and motivated staff in appropriate roles  
• The core of the delivery is delivered with fidelity |
| Targeted young people | • Priority for young people at risk of getting involved in ASB or crime.  
• Voluntary engagement of young people in the sessions | • Eligible young people that need the intervention are served |
| Appropriate location | • Local, walking distance  
• Avoiding negative connections if possible such as schools, territory. | • The core of the intervention is well-planned |
| Sports sessions that offer more than just taking part in sport | • Sport as a magnet for young people  
• Build in social element to support new peer groups  
• Build in positive sports experiences such as learning new skills.  
• Person-centred approach  
• Offer leadership and volunteering opportunities for personal development  
• Provide non-sporting content with local agencies to address issues such as substance misuse. | • There are clearly specified activities  
• The core of the intervention is well-planned  
• Supported by a logic model |
| Multi agency approach | • Involvement of other agencies to bring non-sporting content and to develop new relationships with young people | • The core of the intervention is well-planned |
| High retention rates | • Engagement of young people over a longer time to establish rapport and to achieve intermediate outcomes.  
• Regular monitoring by project staff | • Retention of young people and dosage of service delivery are routinely monitored |
| Sustainability | • Planning for the long term delivery of the session to support intermediate outcomes | • The intervention is fully integrated into core business |
| Data collection | • Standard data is collected and reviewed regularly by project staff | • Outcomes of children and young people are routinely monitored.  
• The delivery organisation is able to effectively gather, analyse and communicate evidence. |
References:


New Philanthropy Capital, Teenage Kicks – the value of sport in reducing youth crime:


Sport and Recreation Alliance (2012) Game of Life:


