Jamal Bernard, 20, began as a participant in a StreetGames Doorstep Sport sessions in the Metropolitan St Martin’s Estate in Tulse Hill in 2011. On leaving college Jamal successfully secured an apprenticeship with Metropolitan Housing as an advisor of youth finance to young residents, liaising with and supporting young people and adults who have financial issues.

Although Jamal enjoyed the apprenticeship, he struggled to excel within the role due to his lack of self-assurance and confidence.

All that changed when Jamal took up volunteering with StreetGames in January 2014.

Jamal talks about his motivation for joining the StreetGames Young Volunteer Programme, “Helping others while being involved in sport at the same time was very appealing as I am interested in both.” “Within his volunteer role Jamal supported Metropolitan Housing events and sessions, as well as wider StreetGames national events on a regular basis.

On joining the young volunteer Programme Jamal was also looking ahead and hoping the opportunity may help improve a number of key skills that would set him up for employment later in life, “Volunteering is a really good way to gain experience, experience new areas and learn valuable transferable skills. It’s a good way to network and meet potential employers.”

Four months into his role as a Young Volunteer, Jamal had the opportunity to attend the StreetGames Young
Background Facts for Doorstep Sport

Volunteer Residential in Brathay, Cumbria. The Residential was a fantastic experience for Jamal. Spending three days away from home, meeting so many new people and taking part in team building and outdoor pursuit activities pushed Jamal out of his comfort zone, which was just what he needed to begin to grow as a young volunteer. “Even just going to the first residential boosted my confidence so much,” says Jamal. “Before I would just keep quiet, but now I’ll smile at anyone and I’ll talk to anyone. I didn’t normally do that. It opened me up so much. It was cool being with young people from different areas of the country and being close to them every day.”

Three months later, in July 2014, Jamal was one of 800 young people from disadvantaged areas of the UK who were given a chance to attend the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. At the Residential Jamal had the chance to camp, attend the Commonwealth Games, take part in a variety of outdoor pursuit activities and mix with his peers from other projects across the UK within evening social activities and games.

Events on the camp were run by the StreetGames Young Advisors, a group selected from volunteers at projects nationwide. Jamal was both impressed and inspired. “I saw the Young Advisors both in the Lake District and at Camp Glasgow. Everyone looked up to them. I was thinking: ‘Wow, they’ve organised all this, but they’re also friendly and they’re just like me.’ At first I saw them as a kind of a teacher, but then talking to them, there was something about them you wanted to aspire to.”

In October 2014 Jamal applied and was selected to be a Young Advisor at the StreetGames Young Volunteer Residential at Brathay, Cumbria. Since Jamal began volunteering he felt that his confidence, volunteer experience and knowledge had grown significantly, and therefore was extremely excited to take on the Young Advisor role and learn even more. “I was hoping to get a lot of experience co-ordinating projects and how to multi-manage, and learn how to talk to wide ranges of people constantly.”

Within his role as a young advisor at the Residential, Jamal helped with a variety of tasks including:

• Planning and delivering a national residential for young volunteers from across the StreetGames network, within which Jamal helped to come up with the theme for the residential and selected appropriate team names, mascots, games and resources to match this.
• Liaising directly with Brathay Hall staff to come up with a varied and challenging programme of activities for the young volunteers to enjoy.
• Setting up of the Residential including putting up StreetGames branding and marketing materials
• Motivating and encouraging young volunteers to participate in activities and sessions.
• Ensuring the needs and aspirations of all young volunteers at the residential were met, and that young people participate in activities in a safe and fun environment.
• Planning and hosting his own quiz night for the volunteers to enjoy during their down-time.
• Presenting a number of speeches, sessions and key message in front of young volunteers and staff at various points throughout the Residential.
• Helping to evaluate the programme after the residential.
Within his role as a young advisor, Jamal presented in front of more than 100 staff and volunteers, something he could not have envisaged just months earlier, “I became a Young Advisor and I saw how people looked up to me. It’s not because you’re in that position, it’s because of how you act”.

One of Jamal’s favourite things about being a Young Advisor is the sense of responsibility, being in the position to potentially help young people improve their lives, and enable them to realise their own potential. “You can sense the younger people looking up to you. I feel like I inspire younger people. I have loved being that inspiration to others, having the chance to boost others morale and change their thoughts into something more positive.”

Through his experience of being a young advisor, Jamal feels that he has, “Achieved a lot more than I previously expected.” Jamal developed a number of transferable skills such as time-management, organisation, leadership and teamwork skills through his role as a young advisor. As well as supporting others to progress through his role, Jamal also feels that he has, “learned how to be a lot calmer in situations.”

Through pushing himself out of his comfort zone, Jamal’s confidence and people skills have improved dramatically. “I brought that confidence into my apprenticeship role at Metropolitan. I would have to talk to quite a lot of residents and liaise with them. My role was to get young people out of debt and help them with money issues. Before it was difficult and I didn’t know if I could do it, but after the Residential, I realised that speaking to people wasn’t a barrier for me any more.”

Jamal described his time at the Residential as, “exciting, challenging and worthwhile,” and scored his experience as 10 out of 10. As a result of Jamal’s experience as a young advisor, he felt “a lot more involved with StreetGames,” and left feeling inspired and motivated to carry on helping people on a bigger scale.

A whirlwind year later and Jamal has blossomed into a confident 20-year-old role model in both his day and evening commitments. Others have witnessed the transformation, but no-one has felt it as much as Jamal. “I have seen the difference in myself,” says Jamal.

He completed his Apprenticeship with Metropolitan Housing in February 2013 and applied for a job with StreetGames. Jamal was thrilled to be successful in his
application, and began his role as Business Support Administrator with StreetGames in March 2015.

The role is a part-time 20 hour role, which enables Jamal to still fulfil his coaching and volunteering commitments within his local community. Jamal says of his role with StreetGames and his hopes for the future, “I am extremely enjoying my time so far, seeing the inside of this amazing organisation which is so different to being out there volunteering or running the sessions. I feel like I am open to learn and I am already learning so much in just a few weeks. I have also started boxing training sessions, which are luckily right next to the office and will look forward to hopefully learning enough to actually train for StreetGames too. I strive to build a sustainable career within StreetGames I feel like this is exactly within my comfort zone and I will make my way up since I am here.”

StreetGames
StreetGames is a national partner of Sport England and a centre of expertise for developing doorstep sport in disadvantaged communities.

The charity supports community based sports projects that deliver sport and volunteering opportunities to young people living in the 20% most deprived wards in the UK.

StreetGames works with National Governing Bodies of Sport to establish and develop links between community and mainstream sport. Recognised by the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games Inspire Mark, StreetGames is creating a lasting legacy of doorstep sport in the UK.