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Youth Justice Sport Fund External Evaluation Report



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Evaluation Team Biographies

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Carolynne is a Senior Lecturer in Sport and Social Justice within the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences at Loughborough University. Her extensive research has critically examined the role of sport and physical activity in enhancing the lives of children and young people and in promoting greater equality in, and through, sports participation. In addition to her research examining the role of sport-based community programmes in reducing offending and reoffending Carolynne is also conducting research in prisons which explores the role of sport in promoting health and wellbeing and in supporting desistance. Carolynne is one of the authors of the *Using Sport to Enhance Positive Outcomes for Young People in the Context of Serious Youth Violence – A Theory of Change*.

Dr Caron Walpole

Caron is a Senior Researcher in Sport and Serious Youth Violence within the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences at Loughborough University. Her research is concerned with the pro-social use of sport as a form of early intervention for young people at risk of involvement in serious youth violence. Areas of Caron's research include amongst others, young people's vulnerabilities, the use of referral mechanisms and the benefits of playing sport, volunteering and being mentored as a contribution to a young person's pro-social identity. She runs regular dissemination events to share learning and insight with practitioners and partners in the field. Caron is one of the authors of *Using Sport to Enhance Positive Outcomes for Young People in the Context of Serious Youth Violence – A Theory of Change*.

Dr Haydn Morgan

Haydn Morgan is Associate Professor in the Department for Health at the University of Bath. His research predominantly explores the connection between participation in sport and the enhancement of social inclusion within marginalised populations. Specifically, Haydn's research explores how engagement with sport and physical activity may act as a tool to divert or prevent engagement with crime and anti-social behaviour; can facilitate access into education, employment, and training; develop citizenship qualities; or enable young people to accumulate and enhance various forms of capital which are vital to their sense of inclusion and well-being. He has published widely on these topics and is the co-editor of the book *Sport, Physical Activity and Criminal Justice: Politics, Policy and Practice*.

Professor Rosie Meek

Rosie Meek is a chartered psychologist and prison scholar, experienced in both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Her current research activities include leading a multi-disciplinary team of academics, collaborating with HM Inspectorate of Prisons on an Economic & Social Research Council funded initiative undertaking secondary analysis of 20 years of prisoner survey data and supporting the UN Office for Drugs and Crime on their crime prevention initiatives, including the role of sport in youth crime prevention. She has examined the role of sport and physical activity in prison settings resulting in the 'Sport in Prison' published by Routledge in 2013 and an independent review of sport and physical activity in youth and adult prisons, 'A Sporting Chance' published by the Ministry of Justice in 2018. Other interests include the role of voluntary and community organisations in



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reducing reoffending and promoting desistance and the evaluation of prison-based programmes at a number of different HMP establishments.

Youth Justice Sport Fund - External Evaluation Report 2023

Executive Summary

In the financial year ending March 2023, the Ministry of Justice invested £5m supporting projects across England and Wales to use sport to enhance positive outcomes for vulnerable young people. The funding facilitated voluntary and community sports organisations to undertake targeted work supporting children and young people with a secondary level of need who may be at risk of either entering the criminal justice system or being a victim of crime.

The aims of the programme were to:

Aim 1

Support vulnerable young people, aged 10-17, at-risk of involvement in crime, anti-social behaviour and serious violence through involvement in local sporting activities.

Aim 2

Build capacity and the capability of sport sector delivery organisations to work effectively with their local criminal justice partners, including Youth Justice Services, Police and Police Crime Commissioners (PCC)/Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) structures.

The programme was managed by The Youth Justice Sports Fund (YJSF) Consortium which brought together StreetGames, The Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice, and the Sport for Development Coalition who worked collaboratively to deliver this ambitious programme.

This report presents the findings from an external evaluation of the programme undertaken by four of the academic members of the Advisory Group for the programme. The purpose of the external evaluation, which was limited in scale, was to:

- Undertake in-depth analysis of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) data collated from projects with support provided by StreetGames staff.
- Identify the key learning from the programme.
- Make recommendations based on the learning from the programme.



The insight provided in this report is based on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) data and Project Feedback Surveys (n=218) provided by project staff and insight gained from visits to projects by StreetGames staff (n=172 sessions). The evaluation team also attended Engagement Days (n=4) which brought projects and other stakeholders together at one of 8 regional events, interviews with Regional Leads (n=8) and interviews with project leads (n=14). They also attended the end of programme conference (27th April).

The application process for the YJSF began with Registers of Interest being received from 1718 organisations. More than 400 projects submitted applications for funding and 220 projects were awarded funding after an intensive review process. All organisations that received funding were required to capture and share Monitoring Data, Sessional Attendance and Participant Engagement Levels using an Engagement Matrix at least twice during the programme. Delivery occurred between January and March 2023 with support from Regional Leads and StreetGames staff. All projects were expected to attend regional Engagement Days which involved staff from other projects and other stakeholders including those from the youth justice sector, academics and Ministry of Justice staff.

Funded projects met the following criteria:

- Targeted at young people who all demonstrated a secondary level of need who were identified as engaging in behaviours associated with offending or which put them at risk of being a victim of crime.
- Built on, and extended, existing work due to the ambitious timescales for the programme and the complex needs of the targeted young people.
- Adopted a 'Sport-plus' delivery approach which provides sports activities and other personal development opportunities including gaining like-skills and qualifications, mentoring and volunteering.
- Underpinned by the 'Using Sport to Enhance Positive Outcomes for Young People in the Context of Serious Youth Violence' Theory of Change developed by Loughborough University and StreetGames with support from the Youth Endowment Fund.

The evaluation findings are summarised below to reflect the programme aims.

Aim 1

Support vulnerable young people, aged 10-17, at-risk of involvement in crime, anti-social behaviour and serious violence through involvement in local sporting activities

Programme delivery

The delivery organisations highly valued the YJSF funding that enabled them to work with small and targeted cohorts of young people within a very challenging context.

8,568 sessions were delivered which averaged 39 sessions per organisation over the twelve-week period which included group and individual sports sessions and 'plus' activities not integrated into the sports sessions.



Engagement of young people

7,832 young people were involved in the programme with a total of 68,741 attendances during the twelve-week period. An average of 36 young people engaged per organisation although this varied between organisations. There was an average of 9 attendances per young person over the twelve-week period which was encouraging in the context of the (often multiple) vulnerabilities experienced by the targeted young people. Regular and sustained attendance supports the engagement which maximises the benefit gained. The attraction of sport and the voluntary nature of young people's attendance at the sessions are likely to be contributing factors for these attendance figures.

Level of need and vulnerabilities

Of the 7,832 young people engaged 82% came from the most deprived communities within the bottom four IMD deciles. Most participants (88%) were aged between 10 and 17 years and 48% were aged between 13 to 15 years old. Most participants (77%) were male and 22% were female whilst 44% of young people were from an ethnically diverse background including 18% from a black background. Additionally, 12% of young people engaged in the programme had learning difficulties.

Participants recruited through this programme experienced numerous vulnerabilities and often young people experienced multiple vulnerabilities that were believed to heighten their risk of being involved in offending. Of the organisations involved: 88% engaged young people excluded from school or college, 76% engaged young people with mental health issues, 63% engaged young people associated with gangs and 57% engaged with young people in care/care leavers. More than half of the organisations engaged young people who had been arrested or cautioned in the last three months whilst 44% of organisations engaged with young people who had been a victim of abuse. Other 'vulnerabilities' included: substance misuse, parents with addictions, Special Educational Needs, bereavement, sexual exploitation, learning difficulties, disabilities, being groomed into gangs, missing episodes and homelessness.

The importance of engaging with young people at an early stage was noted because once a young person starts to become involved in offending it is extremely difficult to break the cycle because many of the short-term rewards of offending are hard to compete with. It was also noted that levels of need and vulnerability can escalate quickly.

Young people's experiences of YJSF

Delivery organisations reported that engagement levels had improved from an average of 2.7 at the start of the project to 3.3 at its conclusion. Uniquely non-attendance data was collated which enabled projects to follow-up on and respond to issues where possible. Reasons for non-attendance which included sickness, access issues (transport etc), poor mental health, complex family circumstances and negative peer group influence at the session. Providing food was an important engagement tool for many projects.

Pro-social Development through a Sport-Plus approach

Football was the most commonly provided sport (68% of organisations), followed by boxing (50%), multi-sport (48%) and gym fitness (42%). In some projects the choice of sport was driven by consultation with the young people. 42% of projects integrated the 'plus' activities into their sports sessions and 38% provided their 'plus' activities separately either before or after the sports sessions or on a different day. 'Plus' activities included mentoring, formal or informal workshops or discussions about areas such as consequences of involvement in crime or gangs, drugs and alcohol, the role of a community and making healthy and positive choices. Some projects offered non-sporting activities such as bike mechanic skills, gardening, music, arts and crafts and cooking and nutrition to engage the young people. Social spaces were also used as break-out spaces for holding informal conversations and eating food together.

This programme demonstrated that a sport-plus approach offers more opportunities to undertake meaningful work with young people experiencing high levels of challenge in their lives and enabled staff to build a strong rapport with young people. It also enhances young people's skills and knowledge and provides access to additional support.



Referrals

In terms of the sources of formal referral routes, the majority of delivery organisations engaged some young people from educational establishments (82%), this was then followed by youth justice services (39%), early help hubs (23%) and the police (23%). It is encouraging that 88% of organisations stated that they were working with some young people who were not attending or who had been excluded from school or college as not attending school is associated with offending and being recruited to gangs (Robinson et al., 2019).

Informal referrals are valuable in helping to recruit 'at risk' young people who would not choose to take part in more formal intervention programmes (Hennigan et al., 2015) as well as those who might not be known to statutory agencies.

Organisations need capacity to build partnerships with local agencies to develop and maintain referral routes. In some cases, there was evidence of feedback to the referral agencies about young people's progress as well as feedback from the referral agencies about the positive differences witnessed in the young people.

Aim 2

Build capacity and the capability of sport sector delivery organisations to work effectively with their local criminal justice partners, including Youth Justice Services, Police and Police Crime Commissioners (PCC)/Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) structures

Importance of the workforce

Delivery staff were critical to ensuring young people engaged with the programme and developed the skills and attributes that contributed to positive change. Over 1,000 internal staff members supported YJSF sessions. An additional 492 staff members from external and partner organisations were involved in the delivery of specific aspects of the programme as sports coaches (45%), mentors (28%), youth workers (25%) and staff that provided workshops, training/qualifications and administrative tasks. More than two thirds of organisations were able to engage additional staff into their sessions (67%) and were able to offer existing staff more hours of delivery (67%). Almost half of organisations were able to up-skill existing staff through relevant training (49%).

Experienced staff (either within the organisation and sourced from partners) with expertise in both delivering sport/activity sessions and youth work/mentoring were particularly valued as they were able to provide a consistent and sustained approach which built relationships and trust with young people.

Workforce requirements

A key contributor to the success of the YJSF was the opportunity to provide more focused and personalised support to young people. On average, the ratio of staff to young people within the sport sessions was 1:7, which reduced to 1:5 for the 'plus' activities. Most organisations reported that they worked with group sizes of less than 10 (87% for sport activities; 95% for 'plus' activities) which enabled staff to better understand young people's unique strengths and respond more effectively to their needs and challenges. Smaller group sizes also contributed to fewer disruptive incidents during sessions.

One of the key contributors to the success of the YJSF was the opportunity to provide more focused and personalised support to young people. On average, the ratio of staff to young people within the sport sessions was 1:7, which reduced to 1:5 for the 'plus' activities. Indeed, the majority of organisations reported that they worked with group sizes of less than 10 (87% for sport activities; 95% for 'plus' activities) which enabled staff to better understand young people's unique strengths and respond more effectively to their needs and challenges. Smaller group sizes also contributed to fewer disruptive incidents during sessions.

Many organisations (49%) reported allocating funding to train or up-skill delivery staff according to local and organisational need. Training to enhance trauma-informed practice or better understand the impact of adverse childhood experience (ACEs) is the highest priority for them (34%). Other training priorities included mentoring training (21% saw this as the top priority), advanced safeguarding (18%) and mental health first aid (16%). This training was valued to ensure that young people receive the appropriate 'blend' of support services, which ideally would be delivered by the same person or organisation.

▼ Challenges experienced by staff

The evaluation indicated the importance of staff being supported with job security, career progression and development, and provided with access to services that provide support for their physical, mental and emotional well-being as 61% of organisations stated that additional well-being support is required for those working with vulnerable young people. Exposure to incidents or sensitive conversations involving young people they worked with sometimes acted as a 'trigger' for vicarious trauma or their own mental health challenges.

▼ Partnership working

Many of the funded organisations reported that they had established collaborative arrangements with various local, regional and national partners prior to the YJSF, with 44% noting that they had an existing relationship with youth offending teams, 76% having an existing relationship with a criminal justice partner (e.g. community safety team or VRU), and 30% an existing relationship with a safeguarding partner. Given the relatively short duration of the YJSF organisations tended to draw upon these existing partnership relationships as a referral partner but 62% of organisations reported establishing new partnerships with local youth justice partners or strengthening existing connections.

The nature of existing relationships with key organisations in youth justice changed because of YJSF for some organisations. Prior to the YJSF most organisations revealed that their relationship with youth justice organisation was a 'one way arrangement' and that relaying the message about the potential for sport-based interventions to contribute to crime/community safety outcomes was a challenge. The regional Engagement Events brought different sectors together and strengthened connections, whilst enabling sport-based organisations to showcase the work they do as a 'cross-cutting' tool to support outcomes related to health, employability, and family support. Several organisations discussed the MoJ's 'Turnaround' scheme as one example of

how partnerships had become more embedded and created opportunities to demonstrate to funders and commissioners how the sport sector can mobilise rapidly to tackle issues and offer a sound social investment.

However, establishing relationships with youth justice partners remained difficult, with 64% of attendees at the regional Engagement Events indicating a need for youth justice partners to better understand how sport can help young people, and 36% suggesting that better understanding is needed by youth justice partners about the role sport can play in supporting secondary tier interventions. The regional Engagement Events indicated that there appears to be a strong appetite for greater collaboration to build upon the partnerships and relationships established during the YJSF.

▼ Capacity Building

A key aim for this programme was to build capacity within this sector which is an ambitious aim for a programme with a duration of twelve weeks of delivery. Two of the main ways in which this aim was achieved was through opportunities for training staff, volunteers and young people and the investment in MEL. Collecting high quality and consistent data has been an ongoing challenge for the sector because it limits the claims that can be made for the work that is undertaken particularly as Third sector and voluntary organisations often lack the capacity both in terms of expertise and staff time to be able to collate MEL. Another key element of the YJSF was the collaborative nature of the programme which enabled projects to share their experiences and insight and to feel connected with other and part of a bigger movement rather than operating in isolation.

▼ Challenges experienced by projects

Understandably projects faced some challenges in delivering an ambitious programme but the limited number challenges identified was encouraging and testament to the effective design of the YJSF programme, the application and decision process and the support provided to the projects by StreetGames staff. It also attests to the strengths of the delivery organisations.

Challenges that were faced by projects including the reliance on partnerships for referrals which demonstrated the need for improved collaboration between sectors. Linked to this is a need for improved understanding of the difference between primary and secondary level interventions and the need for greater understanding of the role that sport and sport-plus can play. The varied ways in which young people were referred to projects impacted the knowledge that staff had about young people and this can create risks to the work that is being done both for the young person, other young people and the staff involved in delivery.

The winter months required indoor facilities being used and additional non-sporting spaces such as social areas, games rooms and separate rooms were being used by projects to deliver some of the 'plus' elements. The value of indoor spaces is relevant in the wider context of the young people attending the sessions as 82% of young people come from the most deprived communities where access to warm, welcoming, and safe spaces is not always available. Some projects expressed concern about being able to provide support in the summer months, when young people are in public spaces more due to the better weather and longer days, as this can create increased vulnerabilities associated with a secondary level of need as young people feel the impact of poverty (e.g. an absence of free school meals and a lack of money to access activities) which make the offer of criminal activity more attractive for some young people.



Finally, staff voiced concern at the sustainability of the sessions particularly the targeted work with small groups of young people which requires resources to ensure continuity of provision. This continuity is important for helping to build trusted relationships between young people and staff and for providing them with the potential benefits that involvement in a Sport-plus intervention can bring.

▼ Maintaining the momentum

There was considerable apprehension at the start of the YJSF programme around the timescales for the project both in terms of the short lead time and also the short duration of the programme and because a Consortium approach to support a programme involving 220 projects, all working within the same parameters, to undertake meaningful work with young people with complex needs had not previously been tested. Of the 220 projects that were successful in their applications 218 were able to complete their projects within the ambitious timescales set for the programme. The determination of the projects to undertake this work was noted as being a key driver in achieving this success from the ambitions of the delivery organisations who highly valued funding that enable them to work with small and targeted cohorts of young people within a very challenging context. Regional leads suggested that smaller organisations were able to deliver impactful work just as effectively as some of the larger organisations who have access to much higher levels of resource because of their positioning within the community and the trust that this positioning engendered.

Some of the main characteristics of the fund that were considered instrumental in the success of the programme included:

- Ability to flex the original project plans to reflect with the reality of the context to respond quickly to any unforeseen challenges and adapt their delivery to continue to meet the overall aims of the programme.
- Autonomy to decide budget priorities to reach and engage the targeted young people in their projects.
- A high level of trust placed in organisations to deliver what was needed in their communities whilst meeting the expectations placed on funded projects.
- The consistent and ongoing support offered to projects throughout the programme by the Consortium including MEL support enabled them to collect and report data that would previously have been impossible without this financial and guidance support.
- Underpinning the programme with the shared Theory of Change and clear expectations of projects made clear from the outset.

Regional Leads and Project Staff raised some concerns about the sustainability of these impacts and ensuring that the short-term gains made during the project resulted in longer-term positive effects and behaviour change. Many spoke of the need for longer-term funding to continue the work that was started within the YJSF and ensure that engagement with these vulnerable young people was consistent, sustained, and prevented a regression of the gains made during the YJSF.

Concerns were raised about starting work with young people that could not be sustained in the long term as this can result in young people being let down. Access to additional funding to continue the work that has been started here was understandably an aspiration for all those involved in the YJSF. Survey data revealed that 88% of delivery organisations said that there are suitable local 'exit routes' for young people 27 (12%) of organisations stated that there were no suitable exit routes for young people. Where there were exit routes there often barriers associated with transport, cost or due to a mismatch in age and ability with local opportunities.

Whilst most of the projects were able to access some sort of exit route for those involved in the programme concerns were also expressed that this level of engagement and support for young people with complex needs requires appropriate levels of funding. Short-term funding limits what projects can achieve and makes staff retention challenging. It also creates risks for the credibility of the organisations with the communities they serve when delivery cannot be maintained. Some organisations are creative in the ways that they seek funding for their work and generate surpluses through some of their activities which they are then able to use to subsidise the support they offer to young people. Other projects are working with commercial partners to access resources which go beyond financial resources to provide young people with access opportunities that would not be available to them otherwise.

There is a strong argument to be made that the work that the 220 projects have achieved will prevent costs being incurred in the future. These costs are not only measured in financial terms but also the costs to the young people, their families and their communities which arise from offending.





2. Introduction

The evaluation report provides a brief overview of the Youth Justice Sport Fund (YJSF) and then outlines the external evaluation methodology that has informed this report. Key findings from the external evaluation are then presented and recommendations are then offered based on the key findings.

3. Programme Aims

During the final months of the financial year ended 31 March 2023 the Ministry of Justice invested £5m in sports programmes across England and Wales to support projects that use sport to enhance positive outcomes for vulnerable young people in the context of youth crime. The funding facilitated voluntary and community sports organisations to undertake targeted work supporting children and young people with a secondary level of need who may be at risk of entering the criminal justice system or may be at risk of being a victim of crime.

The aims of the programme were to:

1. Support vulnerable young people, aged 10-17, at-risk of involvement in crime, anti-social behaviour and serious violence through involvement in local sporting activities
2. Build capacity and the capability of sport sector delivery organisations to work effectively with their local criminal justice partners, including Youth Justice Services, Police and Police Crime Commissioners (PCC)/Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) structures.

The programme was managed by The Youth Justice Sports Fund Consortium which was a collaboration between The Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice, StreetGames and the Sport for Development Coalition. The programme started in November 2022 and funding awards were made from 13th December 2022.

The programme delivery occurred in the final months of the financial year ended 31st March 2023. Prior to this was an application process which initially began with Registers of Interest being received from 1718 organisations. More than 400 submitted applications for funding and 220 projects were awarded funding after an intensive review process. All organisations that received funding were required to capture and share:

- Monitoring Data regarding the number of individual young people engaged via the programme, information re the demographics of participants and referral routes into the programme;
- Sessional Attendance including the number of sessions/hours provided, the types of activities provided (sport and 'plus' activities) and attendances; and
- Participant Engagement Levels using an Engagement Matrix to record participant engagement levels at least twice during the programme.



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The programme's structure resulted in all funded projects engaging in the programme for 12 weeks between January and March 2023 with support for both MEL and project delivery. All projects were expected to attend regional engagement days which involved staff from other projects and other stakeholders including those from the youth justice sector, academics and Ministry of Justice staff. Projects that were funded met the following criteria:

1. Targeted at young people who all demonstrated a secondary level of need

This is a broad term but includes young people who were identified as engaging in behaviours associated with offending or which put them at risk of being a victim of crime. These behaviours include disengagement from education and being excluded from school, associating with known gang members, being known to statutory agencies (e.g. Police, Youth Justice, Early Intervention teams)

The secondary cohort broadly refers to young people who could be at-risk of entering the youth justice system due to challenging circumstances or additional vulnerabilities. Young people requiring a secondary level intervention may experience one or more risk factors e.g.

- Risk of school exclusion
- Involvement with the Police
- Involvement in Youth Justice System
- Young people from marginalised groups vulnerable to exploitation
- Young people with complex safeguarding issues or needs
- Association with family/peers who exhibit negative behaviours and/or criminal activity.

These risk factors will often be heightened in areas where poverty and/or deprivation is prevalent i.e., those living in areas in the bottom 20% as identified by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

2. Built on, and extended, existing work

Given both the ambitious timescales for the programme and the complex needs of the targeted young people it was essential that the funded projects were able to use the funding to add value to the work that was already shown to be effective with reaching marginalised young people.

3. Adopted a 'Sport Plus' delivery approach

Whilst all projects were required to use sport within their delivery, projects were also required to deliver the benefits of engaging in sport whilst also providing additional 'plus' activities (e.g. mentoring, volunteering, social action, training and qualifications) to support young people's development. A Sport-plus intervention (Coalter, 2007) provides sports activities and other personal development opportunities including gaining like-skills and qualifications, mentoring and volunteering. Personal development is viewed as one of the key determinants of long-term behaviour change (Nichols 2007).



4. Underpinned by the same Theory of Change

The projects were able to demonstrate that they were underpinned by a Theory of Change for 'Using Sport to Enhance Positive Outcomes for Young People in the Context of Serious Youth Violence' A Theory of Change | StreetGames (Mason, Walpole and Case, 2020). This Theory of Change is founded on academic insight and in collaboration with locally trusted delivery organisations. It was developed by Loughborough University and StreetGames with support from the Youth Endowment Fund.

4. Evaluation Methodology

The authors of this evaluation report were all academic members of the Advisory Group for the programme. The advisory group was made up of representatives from the consortium, academia, the Ministry of Justice and other organisations including the Youth Endowment Fund, Sport England, Sport Wales, the Centre for Social Justice and Substance.

The purpose of the external evaluation, which was limited in scale, was to:

- Undertake in-depth analysis of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) data collated from projects with support provided by StreetGames staff
- Identify the key learning from the programme
- Make recommendations based on the learning from the programme

The insight provided in this report was gained through the following activities:

- Examination of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) data which included a Project Feedback Survey where project leads (n=218) shared feedback about their experiences of delivering the programme (learning, challenges, impact & suggested improvements.)
- Insight provided by regional leads who visited 172 sessions
- Attendance by the evaluation team at Engagement Days (n=4) which brought projects and other stakeholders together at one of 8 regional events
- Interviews with Regional Leads who supported all the funded projects in their region (n=8)
- Interviews with leads from case study projects. The purpose of these interviews was to provide an opportunity for project leads to reflect on these experiences. 20 projects (10%) were approached and this resulted in 14 in-depth interviews with project leads within the timescales for the evaluation
- Attendance at the end of programme conference (27th April) where early evaluation findings were presented to more than 200 attendees

The key findings from the external evaluation are presented under the two key aims for the programme.



5. Key Findings

5.1 Aim 1: Support vulnerable young people, aged 10-17, at-risk of involvement in crime, anti-social behaviour and serious violence through involvement in local sporting activities

5.1.1 Programme Delivery

The MEL data showed that a total of 8,568 sessions were delivered by the 218 organisations involved in the programme. This equated to an average of 39 sessions per organisation over the twelve-week period which included not only group and individual sports sessions for young people but also the additional 'plus' activities not integrated into the sports sessions, demonstrating the breadth of provision for young people.

The MEL data showed that there were 7,832 young people involved in the programme with a total of 68,741 attendances during the twelve-week period. There was an average of 36 young people engaged per organisation although this varied between organisations. There was an average of 9 attendances per young person over the twelve-week period which was encouraging in the context of the (often multiple) vulnerabilities experienced by the young people engaged in the programme. Regular and sustained attendance is an important foundation for this type of programme as it supports the engagement of young people so that they can benefit from the sport-based interventions. The attraction of sport and the voluntary nature of young people's attendance at the sessions are likely to be a contributing factor for these attendance figures.

5.1.2 Engagement of young people

Of the 7,832 young people engaged 82% came from the most deprived communities within the bottom four IMD deciles. This is significant as areas of deprivation are typically associated with higher crime rates. Areas of deprivation are also characterised by a range of factors including a lack of access to transport, local facilities and local services including fewer opportunities to take part in positive activities including sport. This programme was able to target the geographical areas where young people would benefit from access to sport interventions as a form of prevention, early intervention and diversion.

In terms of the age range of the young people engaged in the programme, 88% of participants were between 10 and 17 years old which matched the target age group for this programme. 48% of young people were aged between 13 to 15 years old which is appropriate for early intervention programmes as the percentage of first-time entrants to the youth justice system rises from 24% for 10-14 year olds to 76% for 15 to 17 year olds (Youth Justice Board/ Ministry of Justice, 2022).



In terms of gender, 77% of participants were male and 22% were female. This reflects the emphasis placed on working with boys and young men in this context as they are more likely to enter the criminal justice system. In 2021-22, 85% of first-time entrants were boys compared to 15% who were girls (Youth Justice Board/ Ministry of Justice, 2022). This statistical trend has resulted in girls and young women often being overlooked as the criminal justice system has been developed to deal with boys (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2014) and, correspondingly, accounts for the frequent invisibility of girls and young women in the context of prevention and early intervention (Walpole et al., 2021).

44% of young people engaged in the programme came from an ethnically diverse background including 18% from a black background. The role of the programme for supporting young people from an ethnically diverse background is significant when set in the context that black and mixed ethnic boys are more likely than white boys to be excluded from school (Office for National Statistics, 2017) and to be arrested as a teenager (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Furthermore, as highlighted in The Lammy Review (2017), young people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system with the proportion of young people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds offending for the first time rising from 11% in 2006 to 19% in 2016 (Ministry of Justice, 2017). 12% of young people engaged in the programme had learning difficulties. This is significant as this group of young people is also overrepresented in the youth justice system. The Prison Reform Trust (Talbot, 2010) highlighted that young people with learning difficulties were more likely to receive a custodial sentence than young people who did not have a learning difficulty.

5.1.3 Level of need and vulnerabilities

The MEL data indicated that the participants recruited through this programme experienced a number of different vulnerabilities and often young people experienced multiple vulnerabilities that were believed to heighten their risk of being involved in offending. Of the organisations involved: 88% engaged young people excluded from school or college, 76% engaged young people with mental health issues, 63% engaged young people associated with gangs and 57% engaged with young people in care/care leavers. More than half of the organisations engaged young people who had been arrested or cautioned in the last three months whilst 41% of organisations engaged with young people who had been a victim of abuse. Other 'vulnerabilities' included: substance misuse, parents with addictions, SEN, bereavement, sexual exploitation, learning difficulties, disabilities, being groomed into gangs, missing episodes and homelessness.

The importance of trying to prevent young people from becoming involved in offending was noted by several interviewees because once a young person starts to become involved in offending it is extremely difficult to break the cycle because many of the short-term rewards are hard to compete with. Project leads describe how young people are actively recruited outside the school gates with offers of expensive trainers and food which are attractive to young people whose families are experiencing very challenging times.

"The ones on the line, we save lots of because why things without gang situation is once you're in, you can't come back out, you know? ... It's impossible to get them



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back, but because they would be doing things that are earning them between what 500 to 1000 pound a week.” (Project Lead, Interview)

“So food was quite important as well ...It was really part of the part of the programme ...So we said that one of the incentives to participate in the programme, the activities then we get you food and drink afterwards or we give you some gift cards to go and get some food shopping for yourself or some takeaway or but may maybe they'll get in Sainsburys and Tesco's so they could buy meal deals for school.” (Project Lead, Interview)

Project leaders noted that whilst some of the young people they recruited for the programme were known to them prior to the project, being able to work with the young people in small groups enabled staff to identify information about participants that they were previously unaware of. This enhanced the targeted support they were able to offer those young people.

“We have been able to target specific YP to make a difference to their lives. Working in small groups, breaking down barriers, understanding their needs and wants, giving them the attention they are crying out for in a positive Street Dance experience and supporting them along the way and building a great relationship with the YP has been incredible and heart-warming” (Project Leader, Survey)

“His attendance at school was like 32%, you know, and that and that sort of stuff. We knew his attendance was poor because young people to tell us that, and he would acknowledge that if we spoke to him about it, but not that at all... So getting to know that sort of information and working more closely with those types of young people... It has opened up a different sort of packet package of support that we thought we could give him.” (Project Lead, Interview)

Project leads also described how young people's level of need can escalate in a very short period of time when incidents happen that result in them making poor decisions in response to events around them. Interviewees often described how the young people they engage with respond well to the staff they engage with at projects but this does not always guarantee that the same behaviours will be evident elsewhere:

“When they come to training the football side of it ... they are all as good as gold, right ... But the moment they're going out of the training ground until you'll be surprised they're not the same kids that you've got in front of you.” (Project Lead, Interview)

5.1.4 Young people's experiences of the YJSF

While there is a limit to what can be achieved through a short-term programme, there were several indicators of how projects had provided a wealth of tangible benefits for the young people who were engaged by the YJSF. Importantly, there was also evidence that the projects had laid a foundation for developing more sustainable positive impacts on participants.

In relation to the sport-based activities, delivery organisations reported that engagement levels had improved from an average of 2.7 at the start of the project to 3.3 at its conclusion (see Figure 1). In other words, participants had (on average) moved from being 'curious' about



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the sport activities (watching activities, 'dipping' in and out of active participation, talking to others about the activities) to being 'actively involved' by joining in more regularly, responding to coaches' instructions and enjoying relationships with peers and adults.



Figure 1: Average first and final engagement level recordings (Project staff perception)

More specifically, data from the engagement level recordings, also demonstrated how the aggregated engagement level movements for all participants had been largely positive, with 49% of recordings revealing that engagement level moved in a positive direction between +1 and +4. Importantly, while 42% of recordings showed no change in their level of engagement, only 9% showed movement through the engagement levels in a negative direction (see Figure 2).

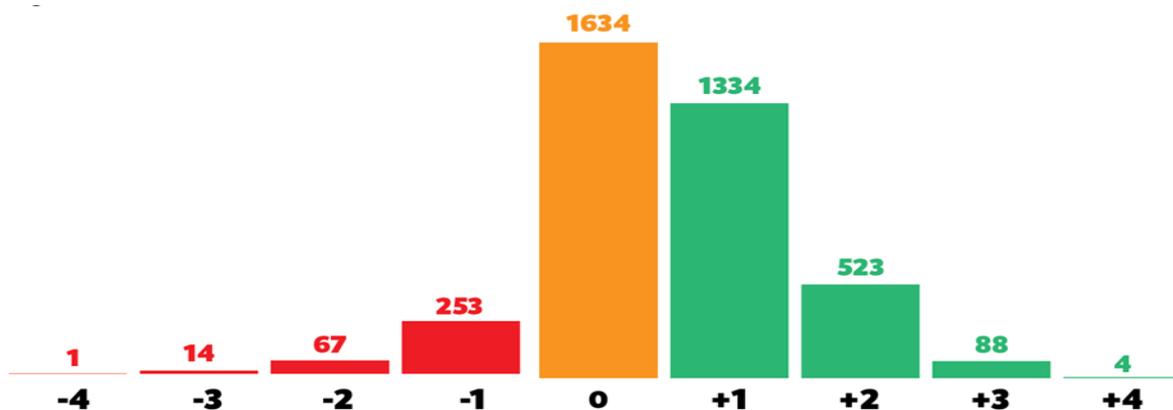


Figure 2: Engagement level movement

A unique element of this programme was the recording of non-attendance rates with the identification of the reasons for non-attendance. The MEL data showed that there were over 13,000 non-attendances recorded. Partial data was available for the reasons for non-attendance which included sickness, access issues (transport etc), poor mental health, complex family circumstances and negative peer group influence at the session. For the projects that followed up the non-attendance, this resulted in changes to the delivery of their sessions. This included making changes to the group dynamics at the sessions (34%), making changes to the activities provided, providing transport (30%), changing the time (22%), increasing staff numbers (19%) and changing the venue (13%). The high levels of trust placed in the organisations with the ability to flex their delivery plans enabled them to respond to these reasons for non-attendance during the delivery phase so that they could meet the needs of the young people that they were working with. This is likely to have contributed to the promising attendance rates and engagement levels achieved by the programme, helping

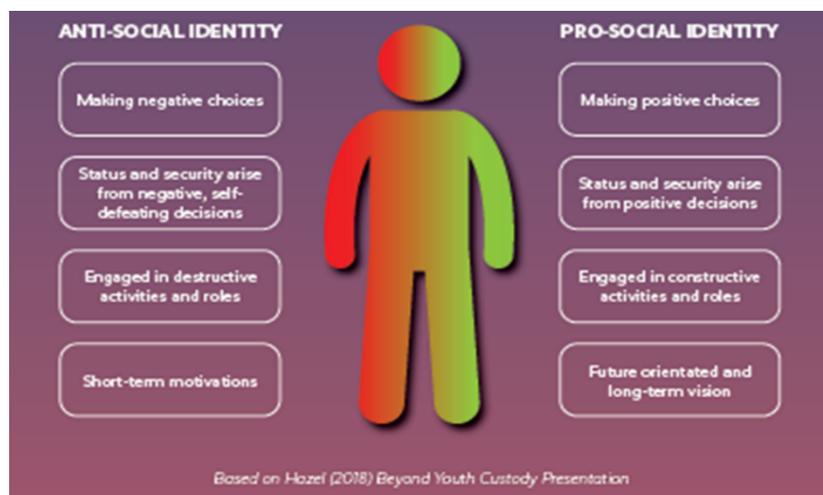
to convert some of the non-attending young people into attendees so that they could benefit from the programme.

The use of the Theory of Change encouraged funded organisations to consider the design of their projects in relation to the ten enablers from this theory of change. The significance of the enablers for their projects was demonstrated in the project leaders’ survey where nine out of ten enablers were rated as either very important or quite important by over 80% of the respondents. The highest scoring enablers were the ‘right staff’ (100%), the right ethos (98%) and the right style, time and place (98%). See Appendix 1 which includes a summary table which demonstrates the significance of the ten enablers for the effective design and delivery of projects.

5.1.5 Pro-social Development through a Sport-Plus approach

Whilst all the projects funded through this programme provided access to sport there was a wide variety of different sports on offer. Football was the most commonly provided sport with 68% of organisations using football. This was followed by boxing (50%), multi-sport (48%) and gym fitness (42%). In some projects the choice of sport was driven by consultation with the young people. The results also showed that the wide range of sports on offer was valuable as different sports attracted different age groups, genders and ethnically diverse young people. The YJSF programme utilised a sport-plus approach which differs from a traditional sport approach due to the addition of developmental opportunities accessed by participants which are known to be important contributors to both behaviour and identity change. This supported a pro-social, ChildFirst approach which aims to empower young people, build on their strengths and help them to make positive choices and decisions, to engage in constructive activities and roles and to be focused on the future. The sport-plus can contribute to the development of a young person’s pro-social identity which is important for preventing offending and re-offending.

Figure 3: Developing a pro-social identity through sport





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SPORT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHILD/ YOUNG PERSON'S JOURNEY

The sport-plus approach used by the programme was based on providing sport playing sessions alongside a range of positive, 'plus' opportunities and activities such as mentoring, one to one support, youth work, volunteering, training and qualifications, food provision, workshops and life skills. 42% of projects integrated the 'plus' activities into their sports sessions and 38% provided their 'plus' activities separately either before or after the sports sessions or on a different day.

In terms of the nature of the 'plus' activities, mentoring was a significant element of many projects. The project visit reports showed that this varied between informal and formal, structured one to one mentoring and was often used for supporting their work with young people with very complex needs. In addition to mentoring, some projects organised formal or informal workshops or discussions about areas such as consequences of involvement in crime or gangs, drugs and alcohol, the role of a community and making healthy and positive choices. Some projects offered non-sporting activities such as bike mechanic skills, gardening, music, arts and crafts and cooking and nutrition to engage the young people. At some projects, social spaces at the venues were used as break-out spaces, holding informal conversations and eating food together. These activities were often run by the project delivery staff, a combination of sports coaches, youth workers and mentors. Most projects offered this 'package' of sport-plus activities to their young people:

"Football session and other multi-sports on Monday. The [project] runs a multitude of sessions throughout the week including circuits and some STEM interventions. They also have access to an allotment and do targeted work with young men who are at risk of exclusion. They also provide 1:1 mentoring." (Regional Lead)

"Students attending the facility have enrolled on Sports Leadership courses as part of this project...The sessions were well-run, productive, active, and provided a good environment for the participants to attend. Sporting activity included football and MMA; cooking and nutrition sessions were taking place, as were informal mentoring sessions." (Regional Lead)

The fund enabled projects to enhance their existing provision for targeted groups of young people using this sport-plus approach. Interviews with project leaders indicated that the developmental opportunities provided through different sports can vary.

"The sport plus element... really had some significant benefits for the young people involved and ...they took this opportunity of using their ... existing knowledge ... to add value to the sport-based interventions they've been delivering." (Regional Lead)

Whilst there is a wide acceptance that sport can be valuable if creating diversionary activity this programme has demonstrated that a sport-plus approach offers far more opportunities to undertake meaningful work with young people experiencing high levels of challenge in their lives. The sport plus activities enabled staff to build a strong rapport with young people and enhanced young people's skills and knowledge. They also provided participants with

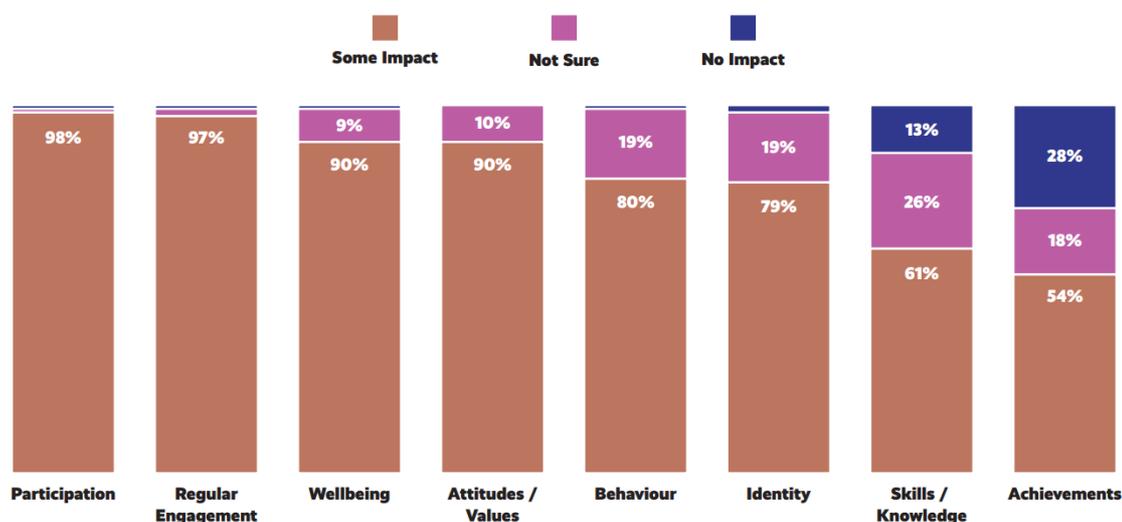


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access to additional support to help them address challenges in their lives. As a result, regional leads suggested that this programme has demonstrated that sport can provide much more than diversionary activity when adequately funded and supported.

“Those individual adults in organizations who can have a transformative impact on a child's life...I just came away thinking about how we spend government money and how easy it is to give big figures to big organizations. And then ... you see someone who really is ... supporting 15 or 20 kids to do their lives entirely. You know who gives them educational guidance? Who gets them from A to B, who does their sport, who does their mental health, who does all of those things.” (Regional Lead)

Of arguably more importance, was the wider impacts on pro-social development as a result of engagement in the projects. While interview data reported a range of different impacts on pro-social development, the survey data demonstrated how organisations perceived the YJSF to enable specific impacts on physical and mental well-being (90%), attitude (90%), behaviour (80%), and identity (79%) (see Figure 4). Previous research is conclusive that the development of these attributes is critical to diversion and preventing further engagement in the criminal justice system, and the evidence is clear that the YJSF has contributed strongly to supporting these attributes.



Delivery Figure 4: Organisation's perceptions of the Activities Impact on Participants

Other tangible outcomes reported in the data relate to the learning of new skills, building confidence/self-esteem, and engaging in training and qualifications. 1002 young people obtained new qualifications, while 59% (129) of projects had enabled young people (n=1546) to access training and/or qualifications. Qualifications and training included: Sports Leader Awards, NGB coaching awards, StreetGames Activator Training, First Aid qualifications, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Bike Maintenance, and ASDAN qualifications.

Indications of the benefits of pro-social development as a result of young people's involvement in the programme were present in the feedback report from the project visits.



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An analysis of these benefits in relation to the intermediate outcomes of the Theory of Change that underpinned this programme can be found in Appendix 3. These indications suggest that young people themselves as well as project staff have observed positive behaviours including increased self-control and less involvement in getting into trouble. It is also worth noting that a constant theme from the project feedback visits was that young people were engaged and respectful towards other young people and the staff at the sessions. This is significant when considering the high number of formal referrals from schools and other partners where young people were at risk of being excluded or who had been excluded as a result of disruptive behaviour. The feedback report also indicated that attendance at the sessions were improving young people's well-being including physical and mental health, improving their attitudes and values including positive values towards their own communities, improving their skills including soft skills and leadership skills and that it was providing young people with positive relationships with their peers at the sessions as well as the project staff.

5.1.6 Referrals

Sport is increasingly seen as a referral opportunity by statutory agencies in its role as a form of early intervention and diversion. The purpose of a referral system is to identify the young people who would benefit from an intervention (Minkes et al., 2005). This facilitates a targeted approach based on identified criteria which is valuable for specific individuals (Hennigan et al., 2015).

In terms of the sources of formal referral routes, the majority came from educational establishments (82%), this was then followed by youth justice services (39%), early help hubs (23%) and the police (23%). Educational establishments as the main source of formal referrals would indicate that young people were at the secondary tier of need which was the first goal of this programme. This also matched the results of the project leaders' survey where 88% of organisations stated that they had been working with young people who were not attending or who had been excluded from school or college. Schools, colleges and pupil referral units (PRUs) can be one of the first places where a young person's vulnerabilities are seen. For some young people, vulnerabilities can result in non-attendance.

'Most of their young people don't access school because of trauma and feel their programme is really beneficial for those with a limited social circle.' (Regional Lead)

"We work with some local gang members to to identify a few people and I attend to sort of early help meetings early help team ...and the ILT which is the integrated leadership team meetings ... I've got some people from there and but mainly from our own people and I knew already from conversations with our own young people that we had young people that was on that sort of level 2 sort of a category ... and because it was quite a quick, fast turnaround, yeah, we just thought we're going to go with what we got." (Project Lead, Interview)

Vulnerabilities can be manifested in behavioural difficulties which can result in school exclusion. Persistent disruptive behaviour was the most common reason for secondary school



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exclusions for the most recent data for spring term of 2021/22 (Department for Education, 2023). As not attending school is associated with offending and being recruited to gangs (Robinson et al., 2019), the formal referral of young people by education establishments has the potential to be an effective form of early intervention. Youth justice services as the second main source of formal referrals indicates that young people at the higher end of the secondary tier of need are also being recruited to the programme as they would already have had contact with the police and been involved in offending behaviour. The involvement of these statutory agencies including early help hubs and the police suggests that a wide range of statutory agencies working with vulnerable young people view sport as a valuable formal referral opportunity.

'Youth justice support worker with one young male and she commented that this is the only activity that he is interested in.' (Regional Lead)

The most common form of referral route to the programme was informal referrals. Informal referrals from statutory agencies are usually the result of existing knowledge about interventions by practitioners when agreed protocols are not in place. As Robinson (2014) highlights, agreeing shared referral protocols is not always straightforward and can be lengthy. The use of informal referrals is valuable as it also helps to recruit 'at risk' young people who would not choose to take part in more formal intervention programmes (Hennigan et al., 2015) as well as those who might not be known to statutory agencies. Informal and self-referral routes to the programme included recruiting young people as a result of outreach work, involvement in existing sessions and those signposted by significant adults including family members. The use of informal referral routes including self-referrals is also advantageous as it supports the voluntary participation of young people which is important for engagement (Nichols, 2007).

As the feedback from the project visits suggested, organisations needed to have the capacity to build partnerships with local agencies to develop and maintain referral routes. For organisations with strong existing partnerships in place, this was more straightforward and required less time. In some cases, there was evidence of feedback to the referral agencies about young people's progress as well as feedback from the referral agencies about the differences that they themselves had seen in the young people.

'Had great feedback from local partners who are referring into the project' (Regional Lead).

However, for some organisations that were starting to develop partnerships including schools and youth offending teams, it took longer than expected and some were still receiving low numbers of referrals and finding it challenging to move the referrals forward.

'They have received a good number of referrals but still struggling to recruit the right young people. Discussion around needing better contacts so we spoke about [name of] VRU and their interest in the programmes.' (Regional Lead)



This also reinforced the importance of having informal referral routes in place. A reliance solely on formal referral routes could have potentially resulted in a low number of young people recruited to a delivery programme which only ran for a twelve-week period.

The combination of formal and informal referral routes proved to be an effective recruitment method for this programme. It offered the opportunity for a positive sports intervention not just for young people already working with statutory agencies but also for young people outside the system with vulnerabilities. This combined approach was significant for its contribution to the engagement of over 7,800 young people to the programme. 5.2 Aim 2: Build capacity and the capability of sport sector delivery organisations to work effectively with their local criminal justice partners, including Youth Justice Services, Police and Police Crime Commissioners (PCC)/Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) structures.

5.2.1 Importance of the Workforce

The feedback report from in-person visits by StreetGames staff to 172 sessions is helpful as a tool to confirm the project findings as it presents a valuable snapshot picture of the delivery that was taking place. This feedback report was based on the observation of individual sessions and talking to both young people attending the sessions and project staff including partners at some projects. The feedback report shows that sessions were well-run, the right young people were engaged, recruited by formal, informal and self-referral mechanisms, strong relationships between young people and the project staff, they were using sport as a positive activity and providing the additional 'plus' activities such as youth work, mentoring, workshops and personal development skills. Unsurprisingly, the evaluation found that delivery staff were critical to this achievement and to ensuring young people engaged more intently with the programmes and developed the skills and attributes that contributed to positive change.

In summary:

- Over 1,000 internal staff members supported YJSF sessions
- An additional 492 staff members from external/partner organisations were involved in the delivery of specific aspects of the programme as sports coaches (45%), mentors (28%), youth workers (25%) and staff that provided workshops, training/qualifications and administrative tasks.
- 67% of organisations were able to engage additional staff into their sessions.
- 67% of organisations were able to offer existing staff more hours of delivery.
- 49% of organisations had been able to up-skill existing staff through relevant training.

The value of having experienced staff (either within the organisation and sourced from partners) who could provide expertise in both delivering sport/activity sessions and youth work/mentoring was particularly important as they were able to provide a consistent and sustained approach to programme delivery that young people trusted and could build relationships around.



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“Part of the reason as an element of success is that these three months have enabled us to accelerate relationships ... I'd say that those shared experiences created intimacy and trust and these relationships get accelerated with time.” (Project Leader, interview)

“Being able to buy in specialist professionals, the quality of session is high ... Having youth workers with existing relationships with the young people support the session ensured that behaviour was managed well, and longer lasting outcomes could be achieved”. (Project Leader, Survey Response)

Creating relationships with young people is at the heart of the delivery for the organisations funded by the YJSF and the importance of these relationships in supporting young people with a secondary level of need cannot be underestimated.

“The hardest bit of any Community development or intervention work are those relationships that you have with participants ... when selecting who to invest in it would be investing in ... where the relationship building sits ... Within grassroots community organizations ... the type of intervention is the easiest bit to amend.... or change or alter or develop ... quality exists where you can develop those relationships.” (Regional Lead)

5.2.2 Workforce Requirements

One of the key contributors to the success of the YJSF was the opportunity to provide more focused and personalised support to young people. On average, the ratio of staff to young people within the sport sessions was 1:7, which reduced to 1:5 for the ‘plus’ activities. Indeed, the majority of organisations reported that they worked with group sizes of less than 10 (87% for sport activities; 95% for ‘plus’ activities) which enabled staff to better understand young people’s unique strengths and respond more effectively to their needs and challenges. Smaller group sizes also contributed to fewer disruptive incidents during sessions.

While the flexibility of funding enabled organisations to source additional or specialist support for mentoring, youth work, and counselling services, many organisations (49%) reported that they had been able to allocate funding to train or up-skill delivery staff. While the specific types of training undertaken often responded to local, organisational need, the data revealed that organisations believed that training to enhance trauma-informed practice or better understand the impact of adverse childhood experience (ACEs) is the highest priority for them (34%). Organisations who undertook trauma-informed/ACEs training explained its importance for understanding their own experiences of trauma as well as the issues facing the young people they worked with:

“It’s important to get [coaches and mentors] trauma aware going into this work. On this project a lot of the young youth workers related to what was being told [in the training] and kind of look at their own experiences in depth, before they can pass that training on to others.” (Project Leader, interview).



Other training priorities mentioned by organisations included mentoring training (21% saw this as the top priority), advanced safeguarding (18%) and mental health first aid (16%). The provision of these priorities for training should be an essential aspect of future programming to ensure that young people receive the appropriate ‘blend’ of support services, which ideally would be delivered by the same person or organisation. One organisation revealed that the integration of these training priorities is already embedded in their practice:

“Any staff coming on to my team, whether they're part-time, full-time, volunteers, or on a placement receives basic training on safeguarding, working with children, [child] exploitation training, trauma-informed practice [training], equality and diversity, first aid, and training around mental health first, and substance misuse” (Project Leader, interview).

5.2.3 Challenges experienced by staff

Given the clear importance of a functional and consistent workforce as a key enabler of personal development in young people, it is vital that staff working on sport-based interventions are supported with their own career progression and development, and provided with access to services that provide support for their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

61% of organisations said that additional well-being support is required for those working with vulnerable young people in sport sector. Specifically, concerns were raised around the mental health of staff where exposure to incidents or sensitive conversations involving young people they worked with sometimes acted as a ‘trigger’ for vicarious trauma or their own mental health challenges. Respondents offered a range of practical solutions to better support the well-being of staff, including supervision from more senior staff, specific training on managing trauma and personal mental health, dedicated spaces for staff to offload or share challenging/traumatic case study experiences (with either colleagues or clinical professionals), and opportunities to take ‘time out’ for reflection and ‘processing’ caseloads. Continued funding to support staff well-being was described by one respondent as “gold dust”, while another remarked:

“It is important to support staff well-being to prevent vicarious trauma. We offer staff monthly supervision to discuss caseloads and support staff well-being by providing a safe space for them to talk about how they are feeling about home and work. We also do group supervision which is co-facilitated by a referral partner” (Project Leader, Survey Response).

5.2.4 Partnership working

The YJSF project provided further evidence of how working in partnership with other organisations (within both the sport and youth justice sectors) supported the delivery of key outcomes. Many of the funded organisations reported that they had established collaborative arrangements with various local, regional and national partners prior to the YJSF, with 44%



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noting that they had an existing relationship with youth offending teams, 76% having an existing relationship with a criminal justice partner (e.g. community safety team or VRU), and 30% an existing relationship with a safeguarding partner. Not surprisingly, given the relatively short duration of the YJSF (12 weeks), organisations tended to draw upon these existing partnership relationships during the project, in particular as a referral partner to recruit young people to their programme. Nevertheless, despite the time pressures associated with the 12-week programme, 62% of organisations reported that they had established new partnerships with local youth justice partners or strengthened existing connections.

"It [the YJSF] has allowed us to create better relationships with the police and the youth justice service which we hope will continue for the foreseeable future."
(Project Leader, Survey Response)

Importantly, some organisations explained how they had managed to alter the nature of their existing relationships with key organisations in youth justice. Prior to the YJSF most organisations revealed that their relationship with youth justice organisation was a 'one way arrangement' and that relaying the message about the potential for sport-based interventions to contribute to crime/community safety outcomes was a challenge. While there is limited evidence to indicate that this challenge was addressed through the YJSF, several stakeholders mentioned how the Regional Engagement Events (which several youth justice representatives attended) had helped to bring different sectors together and strengthen connections, whilst enabling sport-based organisation to outline in more detail how their programmes not only contributed to crime and community safety outcomes, but also acted as a 'cross-cutting' tool to support outcomes related to health, employability, and family support. Several organisations engaged in conversations about the MoJ's 'Turnaround' scheme as one example of how partnerships had become more embedded and that sport organisations had created opportunities to further demonstrate to funders and commissioners how the sport sector can mobilise rapidly to tackle these issues and offer a sound social investment.

For some, establishing relationships with youth justice partners remained difficult, with 64% of attendees at the Regional Engagement Events indicating that there is a need for youth justice partners to better understand how sport can help young people, and 36% suggesting that there needs to be better understanding by youth justice partners of the role sport can play in supporting secondary tier interventions. As one respondent explained:

"We have found making links with YJS very difficult and would like this to change in the future given the work we are able to do and the young people we can support"
(Project Leader, Survey Response).

While there is still work to be done on unlocking the transformative potential of effective partnership working, feedback from the Regional Engagement Events identified that there appears to be a strong appetite from all sides to work together more collaboratively in the future and build upon the partnership arrangements and relationships that were established during the YJSF.



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“It raised the profile even more of the benefits of this kind of work with the local authority ... So that was really helpful. And also our Active Partnership” (Regional Lead).

“Along the way, we've managed to pick up some new friends, some new partners who we weren't previously working with, which is ... going to be very advantageous because they're filling a gap for us.” (Regional Lead)

5.2.5 Capacity Building

A key aim for this programme was to build capacity within this sector which is an ambitious aim for a programme with a duration of twelve weeks of delivery. Regional leads and Project leads were able to make suggestions around the ways in which the YJSF had enhanced capacity of the sector. As highlighted previously the funding provided opportunities for training staff, volunteers and young people which increased the capacity of the sector. Another important capacity building element of the YJSF was the investment in MEL. Collecting high quality and consistent data has been an ongoing challenge for the sector because it limits the claims that can be made for the work that is undertaken. Third sector and voluntary organisations often lack the capacity both in terms of expertise and staff time to be able to collate MEL and this is particularly the case for smaller organisations. The investment in support to overcome these barriers has resulted in organisations engaging fully with the MEL and demonstrated that this can be achieved when the necessary support is provided.

“We were quite strict on it (MEL) on this occasion, more so than we would usually be with funding... It's really good to be pushed on this because it's made us think differently about it.” (Regional Lead)

“Possibly the learning is that we can be a bit a bit more demanding... A bit more stringent about things whilst still being really supportive. And how do we make sure we're elevating the projects in their practice as well.” (Regional Lead)

A key element of the YJSF was the collaborative nature of the programme. Whilst the initial funding application process was competitive as there were only a certain number of projects that could be funded the delivery of the programme has benefited from opportunities for projects to come together and share their experiences and insight. It has also enabled projects to feel connected with other and part of a bigger movement rather operating in isolation.

“Everyone working together with the same objectives was so effective.” (Regional Lead)

“I think what was good with this particular model was that it was held by a consortium. So that's a massive bonus for me in that sense because you're not, you're not alone.” (Project Lead)

“I love the fact that it brought everyone together ... I've never seen that happen before.” (Project Lead)



The engagement days were attended by project staff, consortium staff and a range of other stakeholders in the programme. In some instances this led to new connections being made between organisations. A regional lead described two projects that had made a connection at an engagement day which were located in very different communities but who shared some important commonalities in terms of the challenges they were trying to address. These projects continued their connection beyond the event in order to support the delivery in the two different areas.

“The networking opportunity certainly ... there were parallel or subsidiary meetings going on all day between people who wanted to talk to each other. They were in the same room for the first time across the whole region and its hundreds of miles... And that's really been profitable, not least because it's led to NCS bids from people who hadn't previously spoken to each other.” (Regional Lead)

“And I think the networking element too was a capacity building we held. And the regional original event halfway through and we had 100 people there ... I've since spoken to various projects who's said ‘Ohh I've linked up with [name]. Who you know, he told me about this.’ And so there's definitely been a transfer of knowledge and between projects that weren't previously linked up.” (Regional Lead)

“Actually being in a room with people and you know, that's where the connections take place.” (Regional Lead)

“There's been some break off groups for sure. For example, in [area name] we had the youth justice service come back to us after the regional event and we've set up a meeting between them and all the [area name] funded projects to try and look at what consistent delivery could look like there.” (Regional Lead)

The impact of the networking opportunities were considered to be particularly beneficial for smaller organisations who have less capacity to network and yet potentially have the most to gain.

“Being part of that bigger picture and being able to say look, we're a small organization, but we took part in this and it's elevated our learning.” (Regional Lead)

5.2.6 Challenges experienced by projects

Whilst there are some very positive outcomes from this programme it is also important to note that there were inevitably some challenges that arose at some sessions. Appendix 2 summarises some of the challenges experienced by a minority of projects which were identified through project visits by Regional Leads. It is to be expected that projects would face some challenges whilst delivering a programme working with young people with complex needs and vulnerabilities but the very small number of sessions facing challenges was encouraging for such a large programme delivered in such short timescales. It is likely that the very low number of challenges identified is testament to the effective design of the YJSF programme, the application and decision process and the support provided to the projects. Nevertheless, it is worth considering some of these challenges in a wider context. Firstly, the reliance on partnerships for referring and engaging young people proved to be a challenge for some projects, demonstrating the need for improved collaboration. Although the YJSF programme supported the development of new and existing partnerships at many projects



which was welcomed, this is a reminder that partnerships need to be maintained and strengthened with communication at the centre of this work.

Secondly, an improved understanding of the difference between primary and secondary level interventions for some projects would be helpful especially in light of the complexity of some of the young people involved in the programme. The varied ways in which young people were referred to projects meant that sometimes project staff were working with young people that they knew very little about. This lack of knowledge can create risks to the work that is being done both for the young person, other young people and the staff involved in delivery.

Thirdly, the nature of the sports facilities used is of consideration and, in particular, the use of outdoor sports facilities during the winter months as this has the potential to affect attendance – ice, cold, rain, dark evenings. Although this was not highlighted specifically as a challenge, the observation of the sessions clearly identified that additional non-sporting spaces such as social areas, games rooms and separate rooms were being used by projects to deliver some of the ‘plus’ elements. These additional spaces were used to support the ‘plus’ elements such as workshop discussions, socialising, sharing food, providing a warm space, informal conversations for relationship building and one to one mentoring where confidentiality might be required. Although some of these ‘plus’ activities could potentially take place in outside spaces, access to indoor spaces needs to be considered for sessions taking place at standalone outdoor venues such as MUGAs or green spaces especially during the autumn and winter months. The value of indoor spaces is relevant in the wider context of the young people attending the sessions as 82% of young people come from the most deprived communities where access to warm, welcoming and safe spaces is not always available. The need for young people attending the sessions to have access to food as well as a warm indoor space during the cold winter months should be a key consideration for the future design of sessions.

Another consideration mentioned by some projects was their concern for being able to provide support in the summer months as this is a time when young people are out in the community much more due to the warmer weather and longer days. Being in public spaces more can create increased vulnerabilities associated with a secondary level of need as young people feel the impact of poverty (e.g. an absence of free school meals and a lack of money to access activities) which make the offer of criminal activity more attractive for some young people.

Finally, some projects voiced concern at the sustainability of the sessions and their work with young people in the future. The YJSF enabled targeted work with small groups of young people which is ideally suited to working with young people with a secondary level of need but this requires resources to ensure continuity of provision. This continuity is important for helping to build trusted relationships between young people and staff and for providing them with the potential benefits that involvement in a SportPlus intervention can bring.



5.2.7 Maintaining the momentum

Interviews with regional leads and project staff indicated that there was considerable apprehension at the start of the programme around the timescales for the project both in terms of the short lead time and also the short duration of the programme. As indicated by the comment that follows adopting a consortium approach to support a programme involving 220 projects, all working within the same parameters, to undertake meaningful work with young people with complex needs had not previously been tested.

“I think there was definitely anxiety in terms of the on our part... also it being a little bit of a culture change from our way of working ... We were bringing together a mixture of projects that we had worked with extensively and then others that we didn't know at all ... I definitely remember feeling in January, how will we make this consistent but ... the whole experience was so positive and the momentum was amazing. The sponsors from the projects were always quick ... The delivery I think mostly went above and beyond what we would have expected and in that time scale.” (Regional Lead)

Of the 220 projects that were successful in their applications 218 were able to complete their projects within the ambitious timescales set for the programme. The determination of the projects to undertake this work was noted as being a key driver in ensuring the success of the YJSF despite the concerns around the time-limited nature of the programme:

“I think the LTOs overcame the ... shared the discomfort with a short term funded project ... Previously, we only ever talked to them about sustainability and the real benefit to the long-term sustained trust-based interventions and they just got on with it, but I think ... that might be because ... they knew that whatever happens, they're not going to lose interest in this kind of work. They will try and make it work later.” (Regional Lead)

Interestingly regional leads suggested that smaller organisations were able to deliver impactful work just as effectively as some of the larger organisations who have access to much higher levels of resource because of their positioning within the community and the trust that this positioning engendered.

“We saw that the traditional community, smaller community organizations just picked this up and ran with it for some of the small ones just that's their bread and butter and they got on with it and had no issues whatsoever.” (Regional Lead)

Some of the main characteristics of the fund that were considered instrumental in the success of the programme included:

- **Ability to flex the original project plans to reflect with the reality of the context:** This flexibility enabled projects to respond quickly to any unforeseen challenges and adapt their delivery to continue to meet the overall aims of the programme. An example of the need for this flexibility was a project whose access to a Local Authority facility was



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withdrawn at short notice in order to try and attract a more commercial rent for the facility. The project had been using the facility for many years but was forced to find another facility at short notice which was charged at a higher rent and accommodated far less young people.

- **Autonomy to decide budget priorities:** The projects funded through this programme were trusted to identify the resources that would be of most value for reaching and engaging the targeted young people in their projects. Budgets were supported that enabled projects to identify what staff considered to be of most value and significance for the targeted group.
- **A high level of trust placed in organisations to deliver what was needed in their communities:** The expectations placed on funded projects were made clear to projects prior to application for this funding. In addition to the expectations around delivery other expectations included meeting the timescales of the project, engaging in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) and engaging in network activities (e.g. engagement days, conference). The funded projects had all been able to demonstrate their understanding of these expectations during the application process and this resulted in a high-level of trust being placed on the organisations to deliver what they had promised.
- **The consistent and ongoing support offered to projects throughout the programme by the consortium:** In addition to financial resources offered through this programme projects were also supported throughout the duration by StreetGames staff both locally and nationally. Projects benefited from support in the region with any unforeseen challenges and importantly they were supported with fulfilling their MEL data submissions. For many organisations the MEL support enabled them to collect and report data that would previously have been impossible without this financial and guidance support.

“Without the funds provided through the YJSF we wouldn't be in the position to offer such a targeted approach to working with vulnerable young people who are known to the YJS or are at risk...The funds have put us in a better position to collaborate with our local Youth Offending Service showing clear outcomes which we can work toward through smaller grouped targeted work ... The flexibility has allowed us to use the chosen model that works for us which may be different to a funded project elsewhere which has been key.”

(Project Lead, Survey Response)

It is also important to note that the success of the programme also results from the ambitions of the delivery organisations who highly valued funding that enable them to work with small and targeted cohorts of young people within a very challenging context:

“The money came a time when everybody knew they needed it more than ever and ...they were so grateful for it and had so many people that needed it.” (Regional Lead)



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While the data revealed that projects were able to engage vulnerable young people within the short timescales and start to make progress with targeted young people, case study interviews with both Regional Leads and Project Staff raised some concerns about the sustainability of these impacts and ensuring that the short-term gains made during the project resulted in longer-term positive effects and behaviour change. Many spoke of the need for longer-term funding to continue the work that was started within the YJSF and ensure that engagement with these vulnerable young people was consistent, sustained, and prevented a regression of the gains made during the YJSF.

“We talk about it as sustainability, but they [the delivery leaders] talk about letting the kids down ... An impending break in their relationship and trust of some sort that they completely dread. And they're like, ‘this is brilliant and everything is great, but at what point can we not do this any longer?’. It's so hard ... that was the one recurring conversation with all of the partners.” (Regional Lead)

“We've been ploughing the ground rather than seeing the fruit, I guess is what it is. [A partner] has got some funding to keep our after-school sports sessions running ... but it's not anywhere near the same money per session as we would allocate from if we were being funded properly.” (Project Leader, interview).

“Literally [the coaches] are in loco parentis. That was the thing that struck me most of all going out to the site visits ... They were the guardians ... The main figure for some kids, and it was so obvious and visible ... Whenever they [the delivery organisations] put something on that's consistent and warm and friendly and supportive, and [young people] get to do exercise physical, mental well-being at the same time, it's just it's a lifeline for some of these kids.” (Regional Lead)

The survey data revealed that 88% of delivery organisations said that there are suitable local ‘exit routes’ for young people. These exit routes were achieved through internal signposting to other opportunities within the organisation, external signposting to other organisations (local youth groups, sports clubs, or teams) or via access to further development, training, volunteering or employment, within delivery organisations and external partners. However, 27 (12%) of organisations stated that there were no suitable exit routes for young people and where there were opportunities these were often unsuitable due to barriers with transport, cost or due to a mismatch in age and ability with local opportunities.

Case study interviews revealed that projects were able to engage vulnerable young people within the short timescales and to start to make progress with targeted young people but as noted above concerns were raised about starting work with young people that could not be sustained in the long term as this can result in young people being let down.

Access to additional funding to continue the work that has been started here was understandably an aspiration for all those involved in the YJSF. Whilst the majority of the projects were able to access some sort of exit route for those involved in the programme concerns were also expressed that this level of engagement and support for young people with complex needs requires appropriate levels of funding. Short-term funding limits what



projects can achieve and makes staff retention challenging. It also creates risks for the credibility of the organisations with the communities they serve when delivery cannot be maintained.

There are examples of projects being creative in the ways that they seek funding for their work. Some projects that are generating surpluses through some of their activities which they are then able to use to subsidise the support they offer to young people. Other projects are working with commercial partners to access resources which go beyond financial resources to provide young people with access opportunities that would not be available to them otherwise. One of the case study projects started in 2009 with grant funding of £2,900 and now has turnover of £200,000 per annum. Despite this healthy revenue stream the project lead often struggles to pay its expenses because they support so many families that cannot afford to pay match fees or for sessions that their children attend.

There is a strong argument to be made that the work that the 220 projects have achieved will prevent costs being incurred in the future. These costs are not only measured in financial terms but also the costs to the young people, their families and their communities which arise from offending.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the external evaluation findings. In presenting these recommendations it is acknowledged that these are not intended to be aimed at any one organisation but instead are considerations for all organisations with an interest in using sport to enhance positive outcomes for vulnerable young people.

- This report has demonstrated how the YJSF programme was delivered successfully despite being ambitious in its aims and timescales. The Consortium approach, and the support offered by StreetGames, were important drivers of this success in terms of developing and delivering a programme which both united and supported LTOs to mobilise quickly and effectively to engage some of the most vulnerable young people in sport and sport-plus projects. It is therefore recommended that the lessons that can be learnt from this approach are fully explored beyond the timescales of this evaluation to consider the implications for future programmes.
- The projects that were supported through the YJSF demonstrated at the point of application that they were able to meet clearly articulated expectations in terms of providing MEL data, using the Theory of Change and engaging young people with a secondary level of need. As a result, the YJSF funding was allocated to 220 projects which were ideally placed to succeed in meeting shared objectives whilst also being allowed flexibility to adapt their delivery if needed as trusted organisations. It is recommended that greater consideration is given to how future investment can be awarded with principles of trust, collaboration and high expectations being embedded from the outset.



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- An important voice which is largely from this report is that of the young people who participated in this programme and whilst there have been opportunities for adults to connect with each other within this programme the same opportunities have not been presented to young people. Whilst Regional Leads were able to speak to young people the timescales prevented young people formally engaging in the external evaluation or the MEL. Many of the project leads described how the participants in their projects were consulted in planning projects and some young people were also involved as volunteers, mentors and staff in this programme. It is recommended that consideration is given to how young people's involvement in this programme can be celebrated and to how young people can be involved in influencing future programmes at both strategic and delivery levels.
- An important factor contributing to the success of this programme was the flexibility of projects to design projects that they felt would be best suited to the targeted young people and the flexibility to adapt projects if needed in response to the reality of the context they faced. This flexibility was facilitated at the application stage where projects were selected based on clear criteria being met which resulted in organisations that could be trusted being funded. This flexibility was instrumental in demonstrating trust in the organisations that were funded and this trust was rewarded with projects being able to deliver successfully with a very short lead in time. It is therefore recommended that future programmes consider ways in which projects can be supported to flexible in how they deliver whilst upholding the Theory of Change principles which were shown to create an important foundation for the YJSF.
- This programme benefited from the creation of regional and national networks which connected projects and other partners together to share effective practice and to build ongoing relationships. These networks were considered an extremely valuable outcome from the programme by both project staff and regional leads and it is therefore recommended that consideration is given to how these networks can be maintained in the long term.
- In addition to the networks that have been established through this programme, projects have benefited from opportunities to develop staff skills and experience relevant to undertaking this highly skilled and sometimes risky work with some of the most vulnerable young people. It is therefore recommended that consideration is given to how this investment in the sector capacity can continue to be developed through sharing and disseminating effective practice and through staff and volunteers being able to access training for this highly specialist work.
- The projects funded through this programme benefited from a range of support provided by the StreetGames network which enabled them to work in an agile and responsive way to meet their aims and fulfil their MEL obligations. This support was reliant on the financial resourcing that was allocated through this fund, but it resulted in fidelity and compliance that are not typical of other funding streams. It is therefore recommended that allocating sufficient resources to provide appropriate support structures should be considered in future funds.



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- This evaluation report presents the headline findings and the key learning from this programme but there is considerable detail that it has not been able to include in this report within the constraints of the evaluation. It is therefore recommended that more consideration is given to extending the learning opportunities for policy, practice and theory that have been started through this programme in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders (e.g. Delivery organisations, funders, policymakers, academics) with an interest in this work. Considering the ways in which the learning from the project can be best disseminated to maximise the impact is also a recommendation.
- The evaluation indicates that this complex work is reliant on effective partnerships between organisations that support vulnerable young people. An important element of building effective partnerships is creating a shared understanding of what sport and sport-plus projects can achieve whilst also acknowledging that sport cannot work in isolation. It is therefore recommended that consideration is given to how the learning from this programme can be shared beyond sport particularly where partners are looking for ways in which to access strength-based opportunities to support young people known to have a secondary level of need.
- The evaluation presents further evidence of the importance of trained staff, and the relationships that they develop with young people, as the most significant influencer of behavioural change. However, the evaluation also highlights the challenges being experienced in the sector to maintain workforce capacity and sustain a consistent level of provision. There is an urgent need to continue to develop and support the workforce and ensure that staff have the right training to undertake this work. Providing resource to train delivery staff (both paid and voluntary) in trauma-aware approaches and supporting young people with adverse childhood experiences is essential within work which uses sport to address secondary level concerns.

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This report has demonstrated how the YJSF programme was delivered successfully despite being ambitious in its aims and timescales. **The Consortium approach**, and the support offered by StreetGames, were important drivers of this success in terms of developing and delivering a programme which both united and supported LTOs to mobilise quickly and effectively to engage some of the most vulnerable young people in sport and sport-plus projects. It is therefore recommended that **the lessons that can be learnt from this approach are fully explored beyond the timescales of this evaluation to consider the implications for future programmes.**

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Appendix 1: Examples of the project enablers based on conversations from the project visits

The table below based on this feedback report has been designed to demonstrate the significance of the ten enablers for the effective design and delivery of these sessions.

'Theory of Change' Enabler	Examples based on conversations with young people	Examples based on observations and conversations with project staff (including sport coaches, youth workers and mentors)
Clear ethos	<p>Youth-led ethos:</p> <p>'We can choose what we want to do, boxing, football, boxing we can do all of them each time...it's really good'</p> <p>'We planned the sessions with [project leader] & coaches so it's all what we wanted and asked for, so it's really good.'</p>	<p>Local, community-based ethos:</p> <p>'Boxing club in the community centre, hub of community, little cafe on site too, strong partnership working within the community setting adding to a greater sum of individual parts.'</p> <p>Youth-led ethos:</p> <p>'The group have been empowered to create code of conduct to focus, not use mobile phones and how they communicate with each other'</p> <p>Shared ethos:</p> <p>'There is a clear ethos that runs through the whole workforce.'</p>
Multi-agency partnership	N/A	<p>Partnerships with other sport providers:</p> <p>'Link up with {name} service has given 4 months free access to the gym that is working really well'</p> <p>Criminal justice partners:</p> <p>Good to see the police officer hands on, fully engaged in the session not just on the outside.'</p> <p>Youth justice partners:</p> <p>Great to see YOT workers in attendance, bringing the right cohort to the sessions</p> <p>Education partners:</p> <p>'The YJSF has enabled the organisation to maintain valuable relationships with local Pupil Referral Units. [The PRU] Staff are pleased to have had this opportunity.'</p> <p>'Young person was banned as he was so disruptive and aggressive but now communication is open with mum and school it's much better. Spending time liaising with school helps shape conversations at some sessions and helps them work out the problem/behaviour and develop skills to handle better'.</p> <p>'The funding has allowed them to connect with schools that otherwise wouldn't have been able to/ or want to fund places for their students.'</p> <p>Partners to support the sessions: 'Staff discussed the other elements of the project which involved doing additional activity with targeted group at existing sessions. Such as bringing in youth workers & additional support.'</p>
Right staff	Trusted relationships with understanding staff:	<p>Local project staff who understand the lives of young people</p> <p>'Coaches are from the area so know what it is like to grow around here – it's tough, gangs, drugs not safe.'</p>



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	<p>'Coaches are brilliant they're easy to talk to and nice people, cool and trust them.'</p> <p>'Staff understand more than school, feel better more relaxed when here, supported by staff.'</p> <p>'Staff are really good role models, easy to talk too, helpful, they do a lot for us, trust them.'</p>	<p>'The team of coaches were all inspirational and relatable to the young people involved- most had grown up on the estate and had experienced significant personal growth'</p> <p>Female coaches: More girls attending the session & that's because there is a female coach/ mentor involved in the sessions.</p>
Right style, time and place	<p>Youth work style: 'Staff are really good, helpful, talk to us, understand us and treat us how we want to be treated.'</p> <p>A local venue 'Local to where they live so they can walk'</p> <p>A safe place 'Spending time with my friends in a safe space, feel safer, keeps me out of trouble if I'm here learning new moves/activities that is better than being on the street or at home.'</p> <p>'Chance to socialise with friends in safe place & keep away from stuff going on in Community.'</p>	<p>Youth work approach: 'The coaches have clearly built up good relationships with participants.'</p> <p>'Coaching team mix of coaches/youth work qualified.'</p> <p>Young people-centred style: Young Person's Workshop [on crime prevention] was shaped from the Youth Voice Panel that they have.'</p> <p>Adapting to the needs of the young people: 'Staff fully supportive of young people's individual needs and very reactive to challenges on the night.'</p> <p>'There have been some challenges with the cohort of some young people ... but their negative behaviours required alterations to the weekly sessions. My team were able to react very quickly and make the required changes.'</p> <p>Based in the local community: 'Certainly being delivered in the right place, with staff who truly understand the needs of the community and what it's like to be a young person growing up there.'</p> <p>'Area/estate had previously been no go area for services but bike maintenance sessions and MUGA sessions had been built up to work with vulnerable young people in area.'</p> <p>'Lots of local issues on the estate violence, police, drugs etc so here is a safe space.'</p>
Right young people	<p>Vulnerable young people: 'Keeps me out of trouble if I'm here learning new moves/activities that is better than being on the street or at home.'</p> <p>'Keeps me out of trouble - if not here I'd be causing trouble, fighting, roaming town centre/estate.'</p> <p>'The sessions have really helped me with my communication with my mum, school, others and I'm less angry. I struggle with being good but they listen to me here and that has helped me with my behaviour.'</p>	<p>Vulnerable young people: 'Most of their young people don't access school because of trauma and feel their programme is really beneficial for those with a limited social circle.'</p> <p>Young people living in poverty: Visible poverty and vulnerability of young people. Being addressed in practical ways, taxis to sessions, food, warm building.'</p> <p>Young people in contact with the youth and criminal justice system: 'Young people are all high risk, some have been involved in serious offending.'</p> <p>'Youth Offending Team staff emphasised that this funding has helped offer facilities, coaching and mentoring to vulnerable young people in the area who may otherwise struggle either financially or safety-wise to access such facilities and support.'</p>



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		<p>'Youth justice support worker with 1 young male and she commented that this is the only activity that he is interested in.'</p>
<p>Rewards and rewarding activities</p>	<p>Enjoyable activities: 'Enjoy learning something new, something to do' 'Bike maintenance - brakes, cables, how to change - good life skills handy for their own bikes' Feeling better about yourself: 'Like getting frustrations out, like learning to box.' Like to try out new sports, get my anger out, get out of the PRU and be treated like a person</p>	<p>Variety of activities: 'The variety of activities on offer seemed extensive, as did the facilities.' 'Multi sports activities with mentoring offer' 'Boxing session run by 2 coaches. Sport was delivered between 6pm and 7:30pm, then a social 30 minutes with food.' 'Sports activities/life skills/social activities.' Enjoyable activities: 'The participants appeared to be enjoying the activities!'</p>
<p>Attractive offer</p>	<p>Attractive package of activities: 'Football & lifeskills today but also take part in Go Karting, swim & gym & others over the week, lot to choose from football, table tennis.' 'Table tennis, multisport roll in/out football, basketball, gym, school support & food and drink.'</p>	<p>Wide range of activities: 'Predominantly basketball and football with other youth zone spaces and activities on offer badminton, chill out, arts, music.' Providing a sense of belonging: Real 'family' feel about the provision, mix of mentoring and activity working well, space allows for 121 chats, small group activity and sense of togetherness.'</p>
<p>Personal development opportunities</p>	<p>Learning whilst playing sport and doing activities: 'Parkour, confidence building, trust and community issues.' 'Feel useful cos' using hands, can't do school but this is okay. It's fun. BMX session was really good learning to 'pump' & learn new BMX skills, excited, different.' 'Coaches are fantastic, really good role models, self discipline, strength, self control, motivating.' 'Young people found the session a safe place, supportive and all indicated how they had grown and felt more confident and able to deal with their issues and fears.'</p>	<p>Opportunities for young people to develop: 'Young people given responsibilities and goals to work towards, breaking down barriers... lifeskills sessions really help as well as the sport.' 'Coaches can see change in young people - more confident, socialise with one another, really improved social skills cohesion.' 'Really positive change in the young people who were attending, from developing their skills and strength, to receiving positive feedback such as the young people keeping out of trouble.'</p>
<p>Sustained development</p>	<p>Opportunities to continue involvement: 'Want to do more. Have longer sessions/ time here as better to school ' 'The only thing he would change is the progression route. Currently it is a non-contact boxing club but</p>	<p>Opportunities to continue working with young people: 'The project lead is keen for this project to continue, in order to be able to offer this support to these participants, after the project's official end date.'</p>



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	the individual wants to progress into Amateur boxing. The boxing club is in the process of organising the relevant registrations for this'	
Positive pathways	Focus on the future: 'I used to be a 'follower' but now the sessions have helped me change my mindset and focus on goals, career pathways, support from staff coaches/mentor.' Preparing for future employment: '[project mentors] helps with workbook, work experience placement.	Positive choices: 'They described the programme being life changing for the young people involved.' Focus on the future 'Discussion re employment'



Appendix 2: Examples of challenges identified at sessions based on observations and conversations from the project visits

The table below presents the challenges faced by a very small number of projects at some of their sessions. This should, however, not be viewed as typical or used to detract from the overall positive feedback about the effective delivery of sessions from the feedback report.

'Theory of Change' Enabler	Examples based at a small number of sessions based on conversations with project staff (including sport coaches, youth workers and mentors)
Clear ethos	N/A
Multi-agency partnership	<p>Reliance on partnerships with schools: Note: Low attendance at a small number of projects on the days when the school strikes took place: 'Some disruption due to current teacher strikes and half term but alternate options in place.'</p>
Right staff	<p>Understanding of secondary tier of need: Note: t a very small number of sessions (=3), the project staff would have benefited from a better understanding of the difference between primary and secondary level interventions 'Took some time to explore the 'secondary' phases of the programme, of which there are some, but until discussed with key staff the focus was not on their area.' Support for staff to do the M&E (At a very small number of projects, staff had found the M&E process challenging) 'M and E is taking a lot of time to complete'</p>
Right style, time and place	<p>Needing access to appropriate facilities for the right place Note: At a small number of sessions, having access to the right facilities was important. The use of outdoor facilities for this programme (running during the winter months) was challenging at times: Some projects needed to provide transport which wasn't always sufficient e.g. to specialist facilities: 'No longer have boxing ring and that was good to engage and retain young people as doing pad work in ring allowed chats with young people as very 121 and young people enjoyed that.' 'The group could benefit from a larger space to engage all participants.' 'Sometimes issues with lighting and weather because it's an outdoor venue.' 'Outdoor sessions have been difficult with the weather. Other groups use the site at the same time which has caused a few issues at times.' 'Could have brought more but minibus not big enough'</p>
Right young people	<p>Variable numbers of young people being referred Note: At a number of projects, staff found that referrals were slower than expected although referrals did increase during the programme delivery period. At a very small number of projects (n=2), they experienced the opposite and had to put young people on a waiting list: 'Slow in getting referrals but now get a good number and happy with the sessions.' 'They want more referrals to target the right young people' 'Low numbers but good quality work' 'Project going well - oversubscribed, need to have strict criteria or else just a drop off point for early help/ schools/ social work.' Not straightforward referral process</p>



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	<p>Note: At one project, the complexity with the referral mechanisms was significant, compounded by families as gatekeepers ‘Lots of work with YP and families through different referral mechanism informal and formal. tricky with complex families, lots of work with limited return in some cases parents/grandparents acting as blockers to attendance.’</p> <p>Difficulties in working with young people with challenging behaviour Note: At a very small number of sessions, it was challenging to work with young people with disruptive behaviour although strategies were put in place to integrate them back into the sessions, often relying on partnerships and at one project they worked with partners to prevent ASB after the session had finished ‘Had to turn YP away based on behaviour’ ‘Young person was banned as he was so disruptive and aggressive’ ‘They spoke of considerable issues with ASB locally with the young people attending which reduced when young people engaged in activities. However, it was identified initially that when the session finished, ASB increased so a community safety team were put in place to address this which was done successfully.’</p> <p>Difficulties in retaining young people: Note: At a very small number of sessions, it wasn’t always easy to retain young people every week: ‘On the particular session I visited, the young people who had been regularly attending were not present. We found out from a parent who walked by that they were grounded due to absconding from school.’ ‘The participation was lower this evening due to the rain’ There were supposed to be three young people attending and while I was there, they all sent a text to the coach to cancel.’</p>
Rewards and rewarding activities	N/A
Attractive offer	N/A
Personal development opportunities	<p>Need to consider the resources for the ‘plus’ work Note: At one project, the staff had found that their sessions required additional planning and resource:) ‘Going really well but didn’t anticipate the level of extra work this project was going to need. The extra hours for the one to one sessions e.g has been extended to meet needs.’</p>
Sustained development	<p>The need for longer-term, consistent funding: Note:A small number of projects highlighted that they were concerned about longer term funding and meeting the needs of the young person. One project, in particular, had used the YJSF to reinstate a popular session that they had had to stop running due to a lack of funding: ‘Excited about the programme, they have a waiting list and are concerned about sustainability’ ‘Sessions had previously been established there with success but there is a lack of continuity due to lack of consistency in investment.’ ‘Do not like the short funding window.’</p>
Positive pathways	N/A



Appendix 3: Indication of intermediate outcomes experienced by young people based on the feedback report from project visits conducted by StreetGames staff

Intermediate outcomes from the Theory of Change	Examples from young people	Examples from project staff
<p>Behaviours</p> <p>Reduced conflict</p> <p>Regular routine</p> <p>Improved self-control</p> <p>Decrease in ASB/offending</p> <p>Reduced alcohol & substance abuse</p>	<p>Improved self-control and reduced conflict:</p> <p>‘keep away from local trouble/issues self discipline, strength, self control self control and discipline to walk away from conflict and not to be aggressor’</p> <p>‘I’m less angry. I like getting frustrations out’</p> <p>Decrease in ASB/Offending:</p> <p>‘Keeps me out of trouble - if not here I’d be causing trouble, fighting, roaming town centre/ estate, and</p> <p>‘Another described that training is keeping both him and his friend who was in attendance, out of trouble. He described being in trouble all the time prior to commencing boxing training but because he is focussed on his training, it keeps him out of trouble’</p>	<p>Positive behaviour changes:</p> <p>‘Seeing the young people’s behaviour and attitudes change has been brilliant’</p> <p>‘Project staff described seeing a really positive change in the young people who were attending, from developing their skills and strength, to receiving positive feedback such as the young people keeping out of trouble. They described the programme being life changing for the young people involved’</p> <p>‘Parents spoke to - positive impact on boxing sessions YP, family & school has been amazing, behaviour much improved’</p> <p>‘very cohesive group of young boys fully engaged in session, no discipline issues, lot of respect’</p> <p>‘Head of school was present at the session who spoke passionately about the difference the session is making to her young people’</p> <p>Improved self control:</p> <p>‘One young person has spoken about how the session is helping him to manage his behaviour and not flare up so quickly.’</p> <p>Reduced alcohol & substance abuse:</p> <p>‘It moved from young people smoking weed in area by MUGA to now engaging in sessions’</p> <p>Reduced conflict:</p> <p>‘It’s helping to improve some of the relationships between young people who would previously have conflict.’</p> <p>‘It was apparent that a couple of young people who came along were involved in conflict with another member - there were some</p>



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Intermediate outcomes from the Theory of Change	Examples from young people	Examples from project staff
		<p>whispered/underhand comments made from one to another - but this was managed very well by staff who ensured that both parties were ok and diffused the situation.'</p> <p>Decrease in ASB/offending Children said that if they weren't at the session they would be either home on their own or out with the group. They get in trouble for hanging out together in street based settings, and get kicked out of McDonalds when they go there</p>
<p>Well-being</p> <p>Physically active Healthy lifestyle Improved mental health Improved levels of happiness</p>	<p>Physically active: 'Gets me out the house and keeps me fit.' 'fitter, improved cardio' 'He also described loving the physical activity, even though it's hard, he loves the feeling he gets from it'. Improved mental health 'feel better more relaxed when here' 'One described it being the only time where his head is quiet' 'Found writing there feelings down helpful & something they had not done before'. 'helps take your mind of things like mocks/exams', Improved levels of happiness: 'Love the dance sessions, to have fun' 'having fun, chill out'</p>	<p>Healthy lifestyle 'The cooking and nutrition classes help the young people develop good habits.'</p> <p>Improved mental health 'Spoke to a parent who attends every week, to support her son. Her son has been attending for two years, and the sessions are apparently a big support to his mental health' Improved levels of happiness: The participants appeared to be enjoying the session; engaged well with one another, and clearly enjoyed the match at the end of the session.</p>
<p>Attitude/Values</p> <p>Confident Collaborative Committed Caring Empathy</p>	<p>Confident 'build confidence' 'improved confidence' Collaborative and community values: 3-4 of the young people explained they were Youth Champions and enjoyed contributing to the activities on offer. They felt it was important to support one another as part of this role, and make a contribution to this community they value 'this project had helped increase self confidence as a result of learning new skills'</p>	<p>Confident Young people are beginning to engage more, becoming more confident, can see improvements as they are quite immature for their age' 'The Project Lead feels participants' confidence and communication has improved since the start of the project (many participants are under the CAMHS team). Confidence and community values: 'They have known the group for some time and have seen significant change in their attitude towards each other and wider community' Respect 'The respect shown by the young people towards the project staff,</p>



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Intermediate outcomes from the Theory of Change	Examples from young people	Examples from project staff
		street games staff and each of the group members was amazing to see'. 'All young people were engaged, respectful'
Skills/Knowledge In education Training Qualifications	Life skills 'Good life skills handy for their own bikes'	Soft skills 'Communication is better from taking part together, building confidence.' 'Coaches can see change in young people, more confident, socialise with one another, really improved social skills cohesion' Leadership and volunteering 'The session included a number of drills that involved team work, with leadership and instruction coming directly from the participants.' 'During the session, young people showed leadership skills by leading part of the session such as the cool down'
Identity Self-belief Self-efficacy Positive relationships	Positive relationships 'Being part of session with others - being together, coaches are Fantastic' 'staff are good, kind, easy to get on with, know what they are talking about' 'they the project staff] listen and respect us' 'coaches and staff helpful & kind like a family' 'the sessions have really helped me with my communication with my mum, school, Others'	Positive relationships 'As an existing session it was clear the staff have created a positive relationship.' 'All young people engaged really well, some are now a part of the youth voice consortium and have engaged in leadership courses' 'The staff have an amazing rapport with the young people.' 'There is a strong sense of an established community at this project. Participants appeared to know one another, and support one another.'