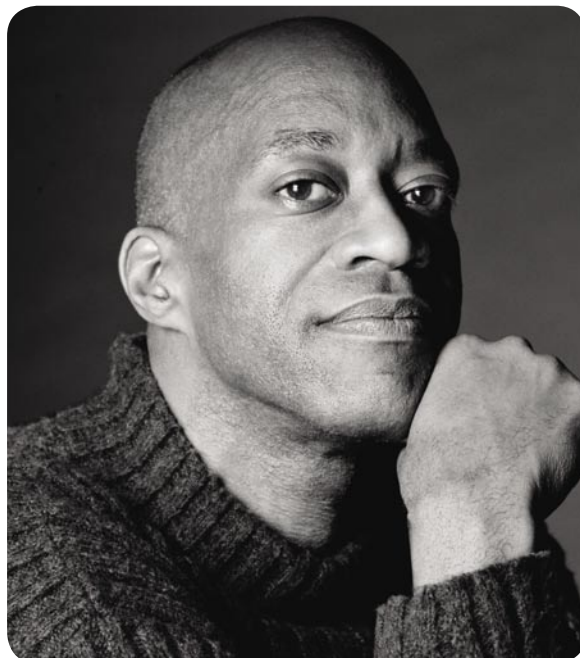




Breaking the Cycle of Violence

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE LAUREUS WORLD SPORTS ACADEMY

At Laureus we're passionate about the power of sport to bring about social change. We've seen for ourselves through the projects we support around the world the way that engaging in sport helps to tackle issues as varied as HIV/AIDS, gender inequality, drugs and sectarianism. So when we see the emergence of an issue such as increasing youth violence – as we have in parts of the UK – we know instinctively that sport has a role to play. But instinct is not enough if we are going to convince policy makers and governments to start to make long-term investments into sport as a social solution.

Drawing on our research and project experience over the last 10 years, this report articulates how we believe sports initiatives can best be designed to meet the challenge of urban youth violence. We suggest some key features that should shape these kinds of interventions:

- A focus on the similarities between gang and sporting experience – meeting young people's need for belonging, status and excitement in a positive way
- A commitment to engage whole groups rather than individuals – working with entrenched hierarchies rather than trying to displace them
- Inclusion of peer mentors into project structures to provide realistic role models and a pathway for future project leaders
- A rooting in the local community and in particular local sports clubs
- Close links with educational and career opportunities for young people involved

And because we know that there are some key gaps holding back the development of these initiatives (namely, a robust evidence base and training pathways) we also set out here our commitment to playing a part in providing these.

I have always been extremely proud of the contribution we make through our role as a funder of pioneering sports projects around the world. But I know that by investing in advocating the use of sport as well as funding it ourselves, we can start to have an even wider impact on some of the most important social challenges facing the world today.

I hope you enjoy reading this report; we'd love to hear your comments. You can contact us at foundation@laureus.com

Edwin Moses – Chairman Laureus World Sports Academy

Laureus World Sports Academy member
Mika Häkkinen with participants from the
Laureus MotorV8 project.



Pretoria – Master Builders SA (MBSA) the national body

However, the conflict between MBSA and some of the stakeholders in Ceta has definitely not

the MBSA's suspension was made an order of the labour court on Tuesday

The MBSA intends to challenge decisions taken at the Ceta meeting last month

Youth crime soars in last five years as gang culture takes grip

Final touches for building charter

Merseyside Police arrest 40 in blitz on knife crime

Pretoria – The construction industry's

Police step up patrols to combat knife crime

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The charter had seven elements,

Rugby offers chance to break free from gang culture

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Stella Sigcau already had the draft

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Knife Crime: Big Jump In Prison Sentences

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1. Headlines point to a deeper issue

The death of 50 teenagers by stabbing or shooting during 2008 pushed the issue of youth crime and concerns about gang violence to the top of the UK government agenda¹. The issue hit fever pitch during the summer as new victims appeared on the front pages of the national media with an alarming regularity.

A raft of measures was announced in response. This included a Met Police initiative – Operation Blunt 2 – to increase stop and search across London, and the Home Office led Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP). There were also tougher penalties for those found carrying a knife, with the Prime Minister announcing that there would be a presumption to prosecute in all cases, rather than simply issue a warning or caution.

The issue was also characterised by political controversies: Had statistics been massaged to downplay the prevalence of violent crime? Had the issue really got worse or was it just being reported more frequently? And were young people being unfairly portrayed in a negative light?

As the statistics over the page testify, it was and still remains difficult to get a clear picture of the situation, or a sense of whether things are improving or deteriorating. Whatever the truth

¹ Statistics collated by the BBC: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7777635.stm>

Kevin Spacey 'shocked' by knife crime in London

Knife crime is top of list

Do criminals get enough time for knife crime?

Islamists target teen crime gangs in London

Mallet-wielding mugging gang jailed over five-month crime spree that claimed 56 victims

A brutal and senseless killing

about the figures, incidents of gang violence remain a cause for concern well after media priorities have moved on. They point to a wider problem of youth disengagement and social exclusion that affects many disadvantaged urban communities in the UK today.

At the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, we want to keep this issue at the forefront of political consciousness. But we don't want to be simply another voice to add to the collective angst about the 'problem' of young people. We are passionate about the positive solution we believe is found in sport. We are committed to advocating continued investment in the right kinds of sports interventions. In this report, we identify some of the characteristics of successful sport interventions and ask what is needed to establish more of these around the country.

Story in figures

33% of British Crime Survey respondents said that teenagers hanging around on the streets was a 'big problem' in their area

BUT:

The risk of being a victim of crime is actually at its lowest level since the first British Crime Survey in 1981. (60% of respondents in 2007/8 perceived it to be higher)

Violent crime carried out by young people under 18 years old increased by more than a third between 2005 and 2008

BUT:

There were 1,978 fewer victims of youth violence in the past year (12 months to April 2009), compared to the previous year

71% of media stories about young people are negative

BUT:

Just 5% of young people are responsible for over half of youth crime

1 in 5 offences in 2007/8 involved knives/sharp instruments

BUT:

Knife crime in London is down 11.7% in comparison to last year

The National Audit Office has estimated that preventing just one in ten young offenders from ending up in custody in the UK would save £100 million a year

BUT:

The Youth Justice Board currently spends only 5% of its budget on preventative programmes

Laureus World Sports Academy member Michael Johnson on a project visit to MYSA, Kenya.



Sources

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Less Crime, Lower Cost, Policy Exchange, May 2009

2. Why sport?

Our organisation is founded on the belief that sport has a unique ability to bring about transformation to the most complex of social challenges. This isn't a fuzzy conviction from a collection of individuals who happen to be passionate about sport. It's a belief that is rooted in the stories and experiences we have seen come out of the sport and development projects we support, and in the research that we have commissioned to better understand the impact of our sports projects.

It is not unusual to think of sport as an activity that is 'good for' young people. At a very simplistic level, sport is often seen as beneficial because it is diversionary: while young people are engaged in sport they are occupied and therefore not hanging around their neighbourhoods with the potential to get into trouble. Concerns about young people spending much of their time on the streets, creating fear in communities (whether this fear is justified or not), drives popular support for sporting activities that will keep them occupied.

Health and fitness is another commonly cited benefit associated with sport. Concerns about childhood obesity have rocketed in recent years, prompting the UK government to invest in Change4Life – a multimillion pound programme to get the population active. Results from a recent Change4Life survey found that nearly three quarters of young people do not take part in the recommended

daily hour of activity outside of school hours². There is therefore a strong public health justification for encouraging young people to take up sport.

While we acknowledge these two advantages, at Laureus we believe that these are not the only benefits that sport can offer young people. In our experience, the real benefit of sport is that it provides a context for

the development of attitudes and behaviours that better equip young people to make positive choices in life. Sport provides an ideal environment for:

- Developing discipline and working towards a goal
- Learning to work with and better understand peers
- Understanding concepts of fairness and justice
- Developing endurance and the ability to deal with setbacks

As our projects across the world testify, engaging in sport also has a powerful impact on self esteem and confidence. Time and again, in radically different contexts around the world, we find the same experience applies: young people flourish as they find something that they can work at and when they understand that their efforts are valued by others.

'What I know most surely about morality and the duty of man, I owe to sport.'
– *Albert Camus*

² Change4Life Campaign Poll, 2009 <http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/Default.aspx> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8015875.stm>

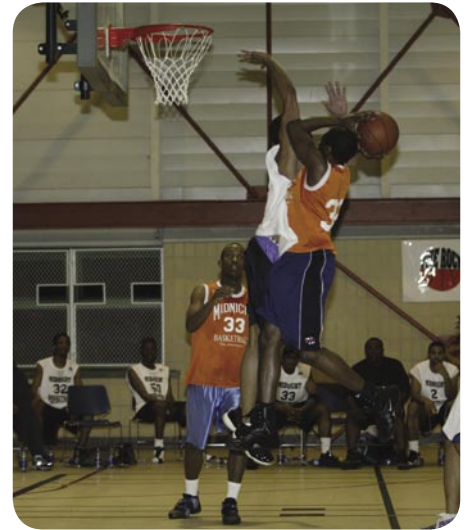
'Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It speaks to youth in language they understand. It is more powerful than government in breaking down social barriers'

– Laureus Patron Nelson Mandela



The Midnight Basketball League (MBL) is a national programme active in 60 communities throughout the United States and Australia. It originated in Glenarden, Maryland, as an attempt to address crime-related problems in the community by offering activities between 10pm and 2am when drug and crime activity was at its greatest. Supported by business, law enforcement agencies and political and community leaders, the original programme opened its doors in the summer of 1986 and in a short time the incidence of reported crimes had dropped by almost 60%.

Edward Riley, who started playing basketball with the Richmond league as a teenager and has gone on to co-ordinate two League programmes himself, explains the impact of the programme: *“The Richmond Midnight Basketball has played a major role in my life since the age of 17. Coming from the urban area of Jackson Ward in Richmond, the programme has given me a chance to give back to my community where the young people often have little or no male role models. The programme has given me an opportunity to advance myself and to give resources back to the young people, passing on what I can about responsibility, fatherhood and dealing with gang violence. I am blessed to have a chance to be a part of the programme both as a participant and as an employee, which has allowed me to see the ins and outs of the benefits of the Richmond Midnight Basketball League.”*



Above: Participants from the Midnight Basketball League.

Lewis is 14. He’s physically strong for his age but due to his speech impediment and low self esteem he gets picked on verbally by other young people, which sometimes him to lash out. His appearance is scruffy, with worn out trainers and school uniform that doesn’t fit. On his first boxing session, run by London Active Communities, he was ignored by the other young people and was told by some of them that “he shouldn’t be at the boxing” as “it wasn’t for him”.

Although boxing is an individual sport, everyone works as a team to push each other along in training. Boxing sessions consist of skipping, drills, partner work, pads, circuits and cool-downs. Through the partner work and drills, Lewis has had to work with other young people from the group. By working in pairs and with other young people, Lewis has become accepted among the group and his confidence has grown. He has made friends and is able to concentrate in the sessions. Since his first session six months ago Lewis has been going to nearly every session. This has helped with his attention span in class and confidence outside of school.

Lewis now has aspirations to box; although he is not ready to compete yet, he is going to the boxing session at the community hub Lillian Baylis Old School, something which he would not have had the confidence to do before.



Above: Working together as a team at London Active Communities.

We know from experience that sport has great potential to impact problems of youth disengagement and gang violence. But we wanted to understand more about the issue as it is experienced in the UK and how sports interventions might best be designed to have the most impact. In response we commissioned a report from Substance³, a research organisation with broad experience in the area of evaluating youth and crime interventions. This study consisted of a review of existing evidence on this subject along with a survey of disadvantaged young people in Manchester, Liverpool, Coventry, Glasgow and London. You can read the full report in the Appendix.

Here we'd like to set out four key insights that emerged from the research and are confirmed by our own project experience. We believe that these insights are significant in building the model of sports projects that will be most effective at tackling the specific issue of gang violence.

3.1 Sporting gangs, not sport against gangs

When asked to describe the features of a gang, the young people surveyed cited positive characteristics as well as more typical negative perceptions. 21% felt that a gang could be described as 'a group of close friends who provide support and friendship and look out for each other'. This perspective challenges us to acknowledge some of the positive underpinnings in gang experience. Gangs offer a context for friendship, play, excitement, channeling energy and a sense of belonging and identity. There is a clear legitimate need for young people to experience these things.

Effective interventions must start from a point of recognising these needs and understanding how gang experience fulfils them.

The potential of sport to make a difference lies in its ability to replicate some of these experiences rather than deny them. Fight for Peace, an organisation that uses boxing to engage disadvantaged young people, began by acknowledging that toughness and macho

behaviour were important to the young people they were trying to engage. This informed the decision to focus on activities that would have natural appeal: boxing and martial arts. The project does not deny the desire among young people to be strong and able to look out for themselves, but rather takes this desire and channels it in

"Every day we tried to get these kids to put down their glue bottles and they never would. It didn't matter what you gave them – pens, paper, nothing worked. Then one of them heard I was a boxer.

I said, 'Do you want me to show you a few moves?' Suddenly, I had five or six of them around me and they'd all left their glue bottles in the corner. That was when Fight for Peace was born." – Luke Dowdney MBE

positive ways by focusing on teamwork, self-confidence, healthy competition and respect for rules.



Above: Fight for Peace provides an outlet for these children.

3. Sport provides a way forward

3.2 Engage the gang not just the individual

Along with positive associations, the young people also highlighted some of the difficult elements of gang membership. 44% of respondents suggested that it would not be easy to leave a gang. They cited reasons ranging from betrayal of friendship and loyalties through to threats of violence and intimidation.

This finding suggests that **sports interventions are likely to be successful when they are able to engage whole gang groups rather than individuals.** Of course, this is not always possible, but where it can be achieved it can have a powerful impact. Substance cites the example of Karl, the leader of a gang of around 60 members on his estate.

A Positive Futures football project was set up on the estate to engage the whole group⁴. The project leaders harnessed Karl's natural leadership qualities, making him captain of the over 14s squad. Since becoming involved, Karl has gone on to volunteer to lead a session with younger groups and, along with four of the other young people, has signed up to take an FA Level 1 Coaching Course.

Where existing gang hierarchies are entrenched, it may be better to work with these rather than disrupt them.

3.3 Make way for mentors

"I have visited Laureus projects where teenagers from the community are trained to be the coaches and mentors of younger boys and girls, who in due course themselves become the role models for the next generation. This simple idea can bind a community together and deliver tremendous benefits for individuals." – Boris Becker, Laureus World Sports Academy member

The most effective role models for young people are often peers from the same area who have themselves progressed through a project to become volunteers or employees. These individuals will have a high level of knowledge and understanding of the local area and will have had the same or similar

³ <http://www.substance.coop/>

⁴ Positive Futures is a national social inclusion programme using sport and leisure activities to engage with disadvantaged and socially marginalised young people, <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/young-people/positive-futures/>

social background to participants. As such, they are more readily able to make strong connections with participants and to form relationships of trust.

This insight is reflected in our research. When asked directly about the provision of activities in their area, young people surveyed cited sports stars or celebrities as the group they would most like to see involved in providing these. Given that reliance on sports stars or celebrities is not a sustainable model in the long term, the fact that respondents placed 'young people from their area/estate' second is probably more significant and more capable of being translated into action.

We have seen the peer mentor model being used successfully in a number of Laureus projects around the world. At Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) in Kenya, peer mentorship is built into the programme by

from the point of view of establishing realistic aspirational role models for the young people, but also in terms of project sustainability since peer mentors provide readymade leaders to take the initiative forward into the future.

3.4 Keep it local

When asked who should be responsible for providing sports activities, a high proportion of respondents identified local and professional sports clubs. A connection to their area is clearly important to young people. This is also borne out by the understanding of a gang cited by many as a group who had 'a shared connection to and respect for our neighbourhood/territory'. These findings point to the importance of interventions being rooted in the local context. Sports programmes that are parachuted into an area, however

“Provision for peer mentors is a key part of any successful sports intervention”



requiring participants to referee football games for the younger children. This approach has resulted in many leaders emerging from the project and the Director today, Peter Karanja, was once a participant himself. At Fight for Peace in Rio de Janeiro, young participants are selected by their peers to represent their interests via a Youth Council. Similarly, this has allowed future leaders to emerge through the project; over 50% of the current staff were once themselves members of the programme who had previously been involved in drug trafficking in the favelas of Rio.

Provision for peer mentors is therefore a key part of any successful sports intervention. This is important not only

exciting and well run while they last, cannot provide a sustainable solution. **Successful interventions need to plug into existing resources such as local clubs and teams.**

London Active Communities provides a good example of this approach; it has recently partnered with Premier Rugby and three London-based rugby clubs – London Irish, Saracens and Harlequins – to deliver rugby-based social-inclusion programmes. It also ensures that all its projects are run with the active support of other important bodies in the borough such as the Met Police and Neighbourhood Safety teams. Creating strong connections between a project and existing groups in the area makes it much more likely for a lasting legacy to develop.

Above: Laureus World Sports Academy member and Vice-Chairperson Boris Becker takes to the basketball court with PeacePlayers International.

Opposite right: Laureus Friend & Ambassador Wladimir Klitschko with children from Fight for Peace.

Fight for Peace was founded by former English amateur boxer Luke Dowdney in 2000 in the Complexo da Maré, a complex of favelas (shantytowns) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Since its establishment in 2000, Fight for Peace has developed a prevention and rehabilitation model to confront the problem of child and youth participation in crime, gangs and gun violence within disadvantaged communities. In 2007 the Fight for Peace Academy was established in North Woolwich, London, in partnership with Laureus and Community Links. We spoke to Luke about some of the elements that make his project so successful.

What do you think it is about sport that makes it such a good tool for working with the kinds of young people you're trying to target?

I think the kind of sport we use is key. Combat sports and particularly boxing are good for working with young people who in other areas of their life may not have been given all that many boundaries or parameters.

All of a sudden you put kids in an area they think they understand because it's boxing – but actually they don't understand the rules. So it's a very effective mechanism for getting them to come into the gym to learn those rules and those boundaries.

And boxing is great for developing control. We had a lad the other day who had his first fight in this country as an amateur. In the run up to the fight he went in the ring with a more experienced boxer to spar. Instead of using his speed, he got involved in a very physical sparring session – which he didn't need to – and lost his temper as a result. In between rounds I told him how important it was not to lose his temper and explained this was why he wasn't doing well in the sparring session; he was fighting the other boxers fight, going toe-to-toe against a bigger, stronger fighter because he was letting his emotions take over. He went into his last round calmly and, using his speed and footwork, he completely walked it. It's a small example but this is the learning that is passed on to other areas of your life: using your head first and not giving in to emotions. Losing control is something that a lot of the young people have difficulty with.

How do you make sure your project is rooted in the local community?

We try to bring as many people in as possible; we have local police come down all the time, we have young people involved in residents' association meetings. This stuff just doesn't work at all without local partners.

A lot of it is about the project set up. We'd



never go into a community without identifying carefully first who the right partners are. We spoke to about ten partners in the UK before we found Community Links who've been working in Newham for 25 years. They gave us links into all the other key stakeholders in the community: local authorities, local councils and police etc.

We also make sure we have the right people in place. For example the two key workers we started with in London were both really rooted in the Newham area. One was Newham born and bred and the other has been working with young people there for a long time. So straight away we were able to draw on their expertise and found we could engage immediately; for example, he was able to go up to groups of kids on the streets who he'd worked with in the past when we needed to conduct interviews.

To do it right requires a careful process. We spent six weeks interviewing the young people who would go on to be involved in Fight for Peace, asking them about the issues they face and how they currently deal with them.

And we did the same with local organisations. We didn't go in saying 'This is what it's going to look like', we asked people what they thought. Of course there are some clear principles that are in the DNA of the project that can't be changed, but there are elements that can be adapted to the circumstances of the young people and stakeholder interest.

What would you say are the key challenges for being able to get more of this kind of work happening?

I think one of the biggest problems is developing good monitoring and evaluation that allows you to state your case. A lot of the outcomes are soft, and that makes it hard to really produce that evidence clearly. And of course it's another expense which for a small organisation is difficult. We're currently spending money with University of East London on developing clear social impact assessment which we hope will help us with this.

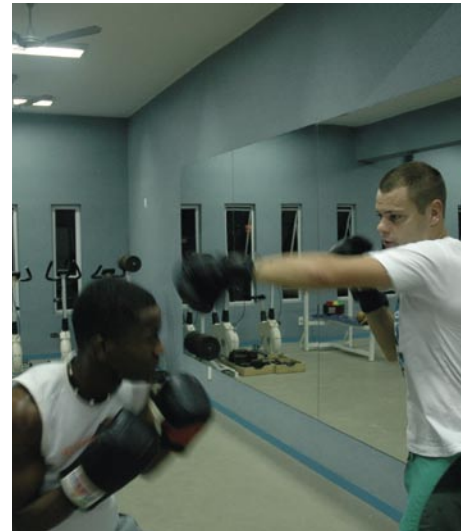
And of course another difficulty is that you're

always juggling budgets. I think things are starting to get easier though; we're seeing more organisations giving two- or three-year grants. Laureus has been a real cornerstone for us; they've stuck with us a long time.

I also think there's also a bit of a bandwagon developing with lots of people starting to talk about sport and development, but few people understanding what it really means. Boxing is just part of what we do. Without the other parts the programme doesn't work. We hear a lot of people saying at the moment that we need more sport in the community. Well, of course you can kick a football around if you want and there are going to be some benefits to that, but unless you really design the education and social side of it, it's going to have much less of an impact on the young people.

What's next for Fight for Peace?

Instead of expanding the number of projects, we're now working at the moment towards having three Fight for Peace Academies in three continents. Our strategy as an organisation is not about setting up as many projects as possible. It's about saying, let's limit those at a certain number and focus instead on working through organisations and training bodies that already exist but could do with ten years of thought about how this works best. So we've got a three-year plan to start to design manuals and curricula around what we do. It's a challenge for us as it is for a number of organisations that have reached our level of maturity. So much of what we do is instinctive. Now it's about drawing out those lessons.



Sport Works

Operation Breakthrough, Hong Kong

Ivan lives in Tin Siu Wai, a huge housing estate in the northern part of Hong Kong, which has tremendous social problems, with high levels of domestic violence, juvenile crime, single-parent families and high unemployment. Many living there rely on welfare handouts.

Ivan was a troublesome, overactive 14-year-old, who was not doing well at school. His school teacher thought that Breakthrough might help after seeing other boys improve in the previous few months the scheme had been running. Ivan enjoyed his rugby and began to shine and worked hard to improve his fitness and strength. However, two years later, he was out in the early hours on his estate and was arrested for robbery. It turned out that he was not involved, but one of his friends was and this brush with the law, and realisation that it might stop his further participation in the Breakthrough rugby team, made Ivan try even harder. He distanced himself from many of his unruly friends and instead mixed more with his new rugby mates. His teachers noticed more effort at school.

On the rugby pitch Ivan really began to excel. In the 2006/07 season he was picked for the HK U18 team and toured Japan with them. This season he became the first Breakthrough boy to play 1st Division rugby.

Ivan has also taken on a coaching role with the Breakthrough rugby team and he has become a much respected coach for the U16 team, which has just enjoyed an excellent season, winning several trophies. This role has helped turn him into a more confident and responsible individual.

Off the rugby field Ivan is still at school, studying hard. He is keen to enter into a sports/fitness coaching course and Breakthrough intends to help him achieve this with financial support.



Top: Luke Dowdney trains an aspiring boxer.

Above: Laureus World Sports Academy member, Morne du Plessis meets youngsters from the Operation Breakthrough project.

Opposite right: Sport remains an under-utilised social resource in many places.



4. How can we maximise the potential of sport?

It's clear that sport has an important part to play as a positive solution to the issues around gang violence. And although we are seeing great examples of this already happening in the projects we support and beyond, we believe that sport remains an under-utilised resource in many places.

There are some key resources that we believe currently limit the ability of sport to make a difference to disadvantaged young people in the UK. We also set out here the contribution we at Laureus are making to address these.

4.1 Sufficient investment for the long term

Government investment in this area is of course imperative. But it is important that investment is over the long term. Our research highlights the problem of 'interventionitis' that can affect disadvantaged communities. This is characterised by multiple high profile programmes, each peddling their own agendas, none of them long-lasting. As an approach this can be highly counter-productive. Much is promised but when initiatives move on or priorities take funding elsewhere, local people

are let down and can become harder to engage in the future.

What is really needed is a commitment to funding in the long term.

- This means:
- Agreeing to grants for longer periods – three to five years rather than single years or short-term projects.
 - Freeing projects from demands to meet short-term targets such as reduced offending rates and allowing them to focus instead on long-term protection against risk factors.
 - Ensuring that the investment into sports infrastructure is aligned with plans for community-based sports projects.

Part of the battle here is giving funders the confidence that long-term significant investments really are worthwhile. This requires a strong body of evidence that makes clear the impact that sport can have on serious policy problems like youth crime. Credible evidence of this kind is still lacking in the field. This is something that Laureus is investing in changing. As part of the Urban Stars project, we are establishing this year with London

Active Communities, we will be running a three-year research study alongside the project activity. This study will use a variety of techniques to assess the effectiveness of sport activities as a vehicle for promoting community development, social cohesion and challenging gang violence. Throughout this process there will be an emphasis on ensuring that the voices of local residents, community groups and involved professionals are at the heart of the evaluation.

The output of this study will be a powerful body of evidence about what structures and activities are most effective. This can then be used to inform the creation of new sport and development projects around the world. The results will also provide a robust tool with which to lobby all relevant stakeholders for the kind of long-term investments that we believe are so important.

4.2 Training in the use of sport for development

If sport forms part of the solution to the issue of gang violence, as we believe it does, then the expectations on coaches and volunteers

to deliver – often in extremely challenging environments – are very high indeed. Being able to deliver a sports project in a way that meets the needs of young people and engages them in a meaningful way requires real skill and experience. **But currently there is no vocationally specific training available to sports coaches and volunteers to cover the issue of youth crime.** Without the tools to train and develop these professional skills, the impact that sport can have on this issue in the long term is undermined.

We are hoping to go some way to address this gap through the development of a training package focused on the use of sport to engage with gangs as part of the Urban Stars initiative. This will provide a much needed training route for coaches, volunteers, community clubs, youth justice agencies and youth work professionals. The framework will be mapped against National Occupational Standards and will be developed as National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 courses. Courses will include one-day sessions on relevant issues such as conflict resolution, drug education and working with young people at risk. This will fill an important gap in training provision, paving the way for the development of a professional workforce to deliver these crucial projects.

Support for these kinds of initiatives represents an important strand of our strategy as an organisation. We recognise that as a funder, our influence is necessarily limited; foundations, however committed, cannot fund projects forever. We will of course continue to invest in innovative projects and to support our existing partners in building up their own capacity to grow and to pass on their expertise. But it is by investing in research that makes a robust case and training that builds up the



skill base in this area that we can have a much greater impact. Through these activities we start to fulfill more fully our mission to be a global advocate for the power of sport as a tool for social change around the world.

Above: Laureus World Sports Academy member Daley Thompson is put through his paces with young participants from the Fight with Insight project.

Below: Urban Stars is helping children affected by gang violence.

Investing for the future: Urban Stars, London



Urban Stars is a new programme from London Active Communities. Over the next three years it will target gang membership, crime and anti-social behaviour in some of the UK's most deprived communities. The project will offer a comprehensive community-based programme of sports participation, coaching and competition. Developed to reflect some of the learnings from the Substance report, the project will tap into young people's naturally competitive spirit, holding cross-borough competitions in cricket, football and basketball throughout the year.

The programme will be underpinned by an action research programme that will produce recommendations and interim reports on an annual basis and a three-year summary report at the end of the three years. Urban Stars will ultimately deliver a training package covering the use of sport to engage young people affected by gang violence.

Sports gang:

Understanding the role of sport in addressing concerns about gangs and youth crime

Researched and written by Substance for the
Laureus Sport for Good Foundation





1. Introduction

Concerns about youth-related crime are currently high on the social and political agenda both in the UK and elsewhere, particularly in relation to the fear of knife and gun crime. In the midst of these concerns and in a context where there is little evidence that punitive sanctions have been effective in tackling the problems, efforts are being made to identify fresh and innovative approaches. Increasingly, sport is being seen as a possible vehicle for change and the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation has commissioned this short report to better understand the issues and identify the best ways to mobilise sport's potential.

While the Foundation is committed to a long-term process of learning tied to an ongoing programme of action and practice, it is hoped that this report will inform the focus of their initial investments in the use of sport to engage young people in the UK involved in, or on the fringes of becoming involved in,

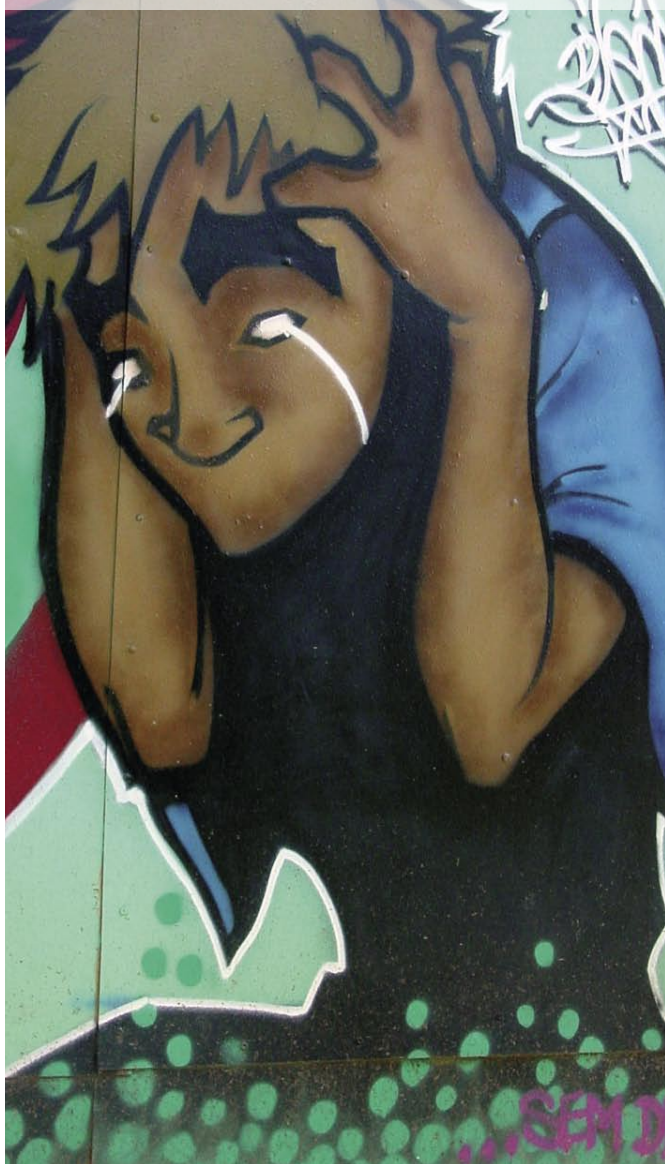
gangs and associated youth crime. As such the report provides an indicative context which is informed by:

1. *An assessment of the academic literature and policy contexts relating to sport and gang/knife crime*
2. *A survey of the perspectives of British young people who are affected by gang activity and who have an interest in and involvement in sport and activity based programmes*
3. *A consideration of case study examples of good practice from the UK*

Finally, on the basis of this evidence, a series of key recommendations and policy considerations are presented to help guide an ongoing discussion around the use of sport-based social interventions in addressing the problem of youth and gang crime.



2. Setting the context: Facts, stats and theories



Opposite left: Former Knicks star and Laureus Friend & Ambassador John Starks looks on as high school students take part in boot camp drills during the 'I Challenge Myself' project visit in New York.

2.1 Gangs and youth crime

Media-fuelled popular impressions might suggest that our cities are characterised by war-torn streets patrolled by knife carrying and gun-toting gang members'. In the context of what is sometimes an understandably emotional climate, it is worth providing some sober reflections on the scale of the problem.

The most recent statistics from the Home Office² suggest that there were just over 22,000 crimes involving knives or 'sharp instruments' in the 2007/08 reporting period. This represents 6% of all the recorded violent incidents involving weapons, continuing a trend since 1995 whereby the proportion of violent incidents involving use of a knife has remained at or below 8%. In 2007/08 the Home Office started collecting additional statistics on offences of attempted murder, grievous bodily harm (GBH) and robbery. For these offences, 19% involved knives or sharp instruments and 37% of those offences specifically involved wounding with intent to do GBH.

The current concern about knife crime has been exacerbated by a number of recent tragic fatal stabbings in key British inner cities and particularly London. However, and surprisingly, in the capital the Metropolitan Police have indicated that knife crime is actually down 16% on the figure for the previous year. In this light, there may be a difference between people's perceptions and the actual physical presence of gang-related knife crime. So while 60% of people surveyed by the British Crime Survey think crime is rising, the actual risk of being a victim is at its lowest level since the survey began in 1981.

It is also worth noting that rather than being a consequence of organised gang crime, the majority of violent offences recorded appear to have been fuelled by alcohol. Almost one million acts of violence in England and Wales are thought to have been committed by people who were intoxicated by alcohol, often on Friday and Saturday nights.

Nevertheless, in terms of the broader category of anti-social behaviour, the British Crime Survey found that the most frequently mentioned problem was teenagers hanging around on the streets, with 33% of respondents saying this was a very or fairly big problem in their area. When focusing specifically on knife crime the findings showed that only 3% of those young people surveyed had carried a knife with them in the last 12 months. Furthermore, in a context where young men aged 16 to 24 have the highest risk of being a victim of violent crime, the majority (85%) of this group said the main reason for doing so was for their protection. Only a very small minority of those young people who had carried a knife reported using it to threaten or injure someone and the most commonly carried knife by this group was a pen knife (46%).

As the *Youth Crime Action Plan*³ highlights though, a minority of young people do continue to break the law and behave in an anti-social way, with the government estimating that 5% of young people are responsible for over half of youth crime. Furthermore, recorded violent crime carried out by children and teenagers has gone up by more than a third over the course of the last three years, with the number of under-18s convicted or cautioned for violent offences rising from 17,590 to 24,102 during this period. In terms of knife crime this is also reflected in the number of convictions of under-18s for carrying knives and other weapons rising from 1,909 in 1997 to 4,181 in 2006. It should be noted though that these figures are likely to reflect more effective enforcement and higher conviction rates, in a context of heightened sensitivities to this type of crime, rather than necessarily a rise in the level of offences committed.

1 The Government's ten-year youth strategy, *Aiming High for Young People* reported that 71% of media stories about young people are negative, a third of articles about young people are about crime, and almost a third of adults think that 'young people hanging around' is a major problem in their neighbourhood.

2 Kershaw, C., Nicholas, S. & Walker, A. (2008) *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08 – Findings from the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime*, Home Office Statistical Bulletin, London: Home Office

3 HM Government (2008) *Youth Crime Action Plan*, London: COI

2.2 Sport participation

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) recognised the contribution of sport in tackling social problems in its PAT 10 report to the government's Social Exclusion Unit in 1999⁴. Indeed Sport England, which has responsibility for the promotion of grassroots and community sport in England, has supported a range of programmes focused around the engagement of disadvantaged young people in sport. However, the DCMS Sport Division, to which Sport England reports, does not currently have specific targets around the use of sport to address broad social agendas beyond the need to raise participation levels.

What is perhaps most significant here then is that Sport England's 'Active People' data reveals the extent to which people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to participate in sport and physical activity.

The Active People Survey found that regular participation in sport and active recreation varies across different socio-demographic groups in the following ways:

• National average	21%
• Highest socio-economic groups	25.1%
• Lowest socio-economic groups	16.3%
• Black and other minority ethnic groups	18.6%

When considered in terms of organised, competitive sport the findings are even more stark. Of those interviewed who had either never worked or were long-term unemployed, 93% had not participated in the last 12 months compared to 76% among those in higher managerial and professional occupations.

Young people, as we might expect, are more engaged in sport and physical activity than older people but active participation is not the norm even among the 16-24 age group. The most recent survey revealed that only 32.7% of 16- to 24-year-olds engaged in physical activity for more than 30 minutes three times a week. Perhaps more worryingly, while this figure rose to 39.7% of those young people in professional occupations, it fell to 28.8% among those who were unskilled, with only a minor variation once respondents' gender was factored in.

It is clear then that regardless of the potential role that sport can play in addressing social issues and youth crime, the majority of young people are not currently actively engaged in regular physical activity. More significantly, as with the general population, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are most likely to be both the perpetrators and victims of violent crime, are less likely to be active participants in sport and physical activity.

2.3 Youth policy

The Government's ten-year youth strategy, *Aiming High for Young People*⁵, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2007, brought a renewed focus to the importance of positive activities and seeks to:

- Address and reverse the negative view of young people as a 'problem'
- Provide funding to be released for investment in services for young people
- Address the additional problems faced by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Address shortcomings in young peoples' social and emotional development through extended schools

- Develop positive activities with support from trusted professionals and adults
- Encourage empowerment – allowing young people to influence services
- Increase access – overcoming barriers to activities and services (information, cost, transport, safety, lack of confidence or low aspirations)
- Ensure quality – high quality services including face-to-face work with young people.

This suggests the need for a change in emphasis in youth provision and especially for community projects working with socially excluded youngsters. The policy shift suggests the need for a move from an approach that starts with a perspective of young people as 'a problem' – diversionary activities to stop young people committing crime or anti-social behaviour – to one that seeks to empower them – providing activities that encourage the positive contribution that they can make to society. In doing so the strategy singles out sport, leisure and culture as key areas for the engagement and development of young people. It stresses the important role of sports, cultural and third-sector organisations and their work in conjunction with the education sector but also recognises the barriers that such organisations face in meeting these new agendas.

2.4 Putting the pieces together: Gangs, sport and young people

In some senses, and in light of the contexts presented here, when considered through a focus on young people, sport and gang/knife crime might be seen to occupy parallel universes.

'Gangs' and 'knife crime' increasingly manifest themselves in the public consciousness as the latest in a long line of 'moral panics'⁶ about the 'problem' of youth. At the same time sport is increasingly held up as an almost universally positive emblem of youthful vitality with the potential to do social good. Whether it be the perceived regenerative benefits associated with the staging of 'mega events' such as the Olympic Games or the need to engage young people in purposeful activity in local neighbourhoods, belief in the wider benefits of sport continues to be widely and strongly advocated.

Indeed, there remains a widespread tendency within sporting, political and popular discussion to regard sport as an entirely wholesome activity for young people to be involved in; an activity that is conferred with a whole series of positive attributes to the exclusion of the social ills facing wider 'society'. This perspective is far from new and without necessarily seeking to do so, has tended to be framed by a perspective which emphasizes what sport does to people and for 'society'.

A number of studies have over the years provided some support for the notion that participation in sport serves as a deterrent to delinquency and 'deviance'⁷. However, to date there remains little definitive evidence of a direct causal relationship between involvement in sports, moral outlook, gang-related or other criminal and deviant behaviour⁸.

Indeed, paradoxically, in terms of the relationship between sport and gang activity, while it could be argued that conventional images of sport stress its wholesome and socially cohesive nature, for the participant it is precisely sports' legitimization of 'deviance' and danger which is often most compelling⁹. For sport itself provides environments in which acts of violence, confrontation and collective distinction making are licensed in ritualised fashion and given meaning through their association with the masculine ideals of toughness, heroism and sacrifice. The bloodstained

4 DCMS (1999) *Policy Action Team 10: Report to the Social Exclusion Unit – Arts and sport*, London: HMSO

5 HM Treasury and DCSF (2007) *Aiming High for Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities*, London: COI

6 Cohen, S. (2002) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics, Third Edition*, London: Routledge

7 See Crabbe, T. (2008) *A game of two halves: Understanding sport based social inclusion*, in C. Hallinan and S. Jackson (Eds.) *Social and Cultural Diversity in a Sporting World, Research in the Sociology of Sport Vol. 5*, Bingley, Emerald

8 See Long, J. and Sanderson, I. (2001) *The social benefits of sport: where's the proof?*, in C. Gratton and I. Henry (Eds.) *Sport in the City: the role of sport in economic and social regeneration*, London: Routledge

9 Blackshaw, T. & Crabbe, T. (2004) *New Perspectives on Sport & Deviance: Consumption, performativity and social control*, London: Routledge

shirts of rugby players, the face-offs between football players and high speed Formula One crashes all adding to sports ultimate attraction.

This 'quest for excitement'¹⁰ can be related to a number of familiar research trends within the academic literature on sport which might be seen to bring together the domains of sport, youth crime and gangs. Elias' concept of the civilising process suggests that historic changes in manners and etiquette reveal a trend towards greater control over expressiveness which masks the continuing human need for excitement and physical expressions of meaning which can today be found in both sport and gang-related activity. In this sense sport and, at times, gang behaviour might be considered as an example of the carnivalesque separation of the individual from the familiar and habitual routines of everyday life.

Presdee's work within the emerging field of cultural criminology draws out the connections between 'crime', carnival and consumer culture which might suggest a parallel between the appeal of gang crime and sport by highlighting that 'what is important, as in all consumption, is the immediacy of the experience'¹¹. Referring to the 'sport' of joy riding, Presdee has demonstrated how 'acts of hurt and humiliation, death and destruction, all become inextricably woven into processes of pleasure, fun and performance'¹².

Considered alongside research evidence which indicates that young people seek comfort from those who welcome them and reinforce their sense of belonging¹³, rather than their distinction, it is the points of parity between gang behaviour and sporting rituals which might provide the basis for an assessment of how sport can be mobilised to ameliorate the more problematic elements associated with gang activity.



10 Elias, N. & Dunning, E. (1986) *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell

11 Presdee, M. (2000) *Cultural criminology and the carnival of crime*, London: Routledge, p.60

12 *Ibid.* p.65

13 Clark, C. (1992) *Deviant adolescent subcultures: Assessment strategies and clinical interventions*, Adolescence, Summer



3. Said and done: survey results and examples of practice

As part of our investigation of these themes we conducted a survey of young people to obtain their views on gangs and the role that sport might play in addressing associated problems. We made the survey available online and promoted it via five youth agencies working with disadvantaged young people in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Coventry and Glasgow. They were each provided with 100 printed promotional cards with the website address for the online survey and hard copies of the survey with stamped addressed envelopes for distribution among the young people they work with.

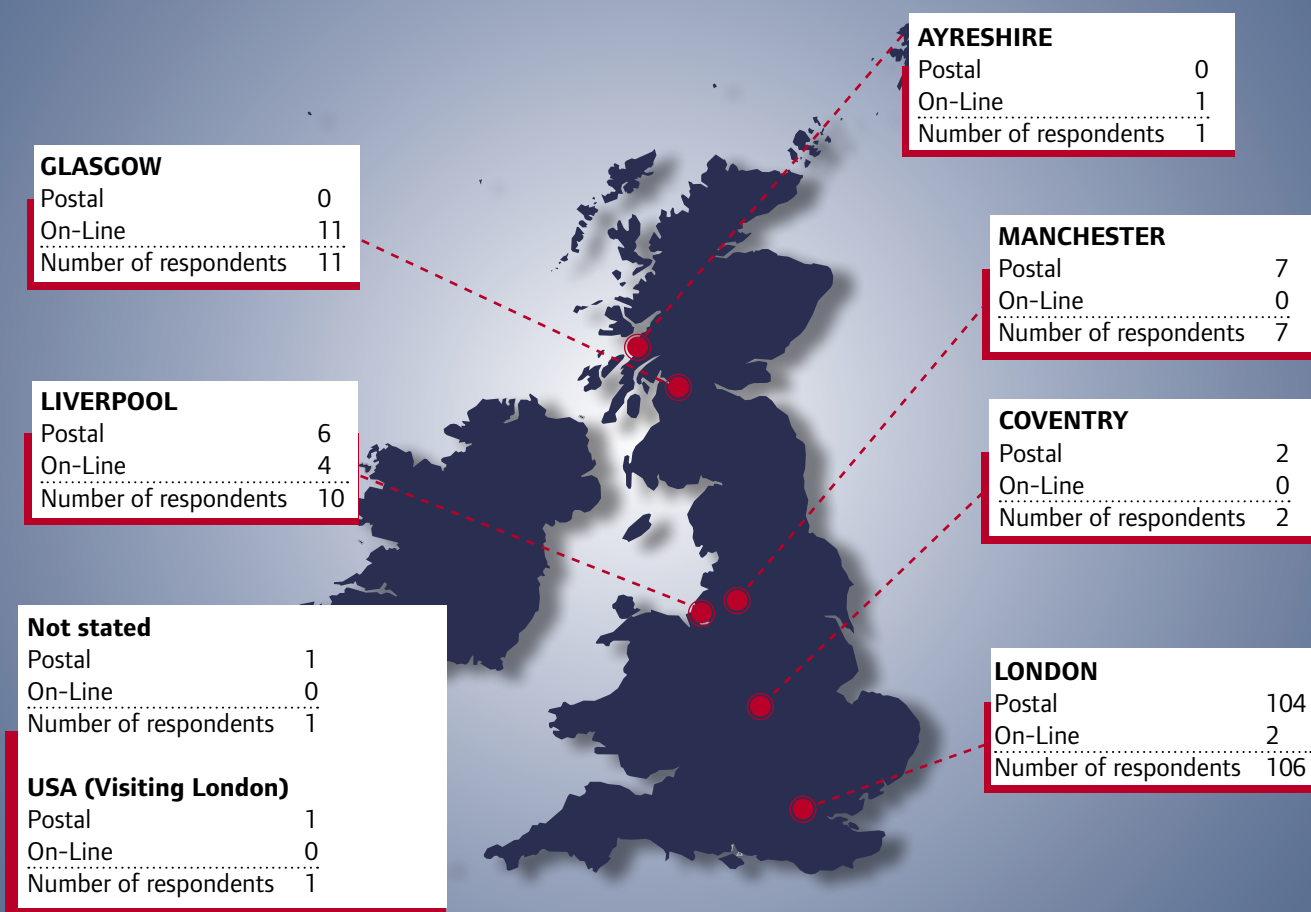
At the conclusion of the survey we had received 139 responses, 121 of which were completed by hand and returned by post and 18 of which were completed online. The respondents were largely drawn from the areas surrounding the project locations but with a higher proportion of respondents from London. While a total of 304 hard copy surveys were distributed to the five youth agencies and 121 completed and returned – suggesting a 40% response rate – the actual rate among those receiving a copy was most certainly higher as we understand that not all the copies of the survey were distributed.

This is due to the purposeful sampling techniques of the project staff who approached those young people they had direct contact with and appropriate time and space to complete the consultation during the specified time-frame. The nature of the close relationship between the project staff and young people within these youth agencies is reflected in the exceptionally high interest and rapid response of the 139 young people who contributed to this research.

In terms of the demographic background of the survey respondents, 101 indicated that they were male and 38 that they were female with an age range from 9 to 21 years. The respondents were racially diverse with 47.5% describing their ethnicity as black, black British, black African or black Caribbean, 36% as white British or white European and 11.5% as mixed.

The survey confirmed the suggestions in the pre-existing literature that young people’s understandings of the purpose and meaning of gang culture is far more complex than popular perceptions would suggest. While 26% of respondents indicated that a gang could be defined as ‘an organised unit of experienced and locally feared violent criminals with one or two main group organisers/leaders’, 21% felt

Table 1: Location and form of survey responses



that it was better described as ‘a group of close friends who provide support and friendship and look out for each other’. One young person suggested that ‘a gang could be anything ranging from a group of friends to a group of people in authority, i.e. the Police.’ Furthermore, 80% of respondents indicated that they felt the media and some of the public view young people hanging around in groups as ‘gangs’ when they are not.

These findings confirm the suggestion that our definitions of ‘gangs’ are often poorly conceived and the need to recognise that young people may well not share broader societal understandings of what constitutes a gang as well as the need to tailor responses according to different contexts. Recognising this complexity, Leap Confronting Conflict has developed a Gangs Activity spectrum which suggests the need for different types of response depending upon the nature of the identified activity which is represented in the illustration below.

In relation to the young people who completed this survey around half of the respondents, 68, indicated that they were themselves or knew others who were involved in a gang. Within this group slightly higher proportions felt that the gang in question was ‘an organised unit of experienced and locally feared violent criminals with one or two main group organisers/leaders’ (28%) or ‘a group of close friends who take part in some minor criminal behaviour together’ (25%). Perhaps

City rivals

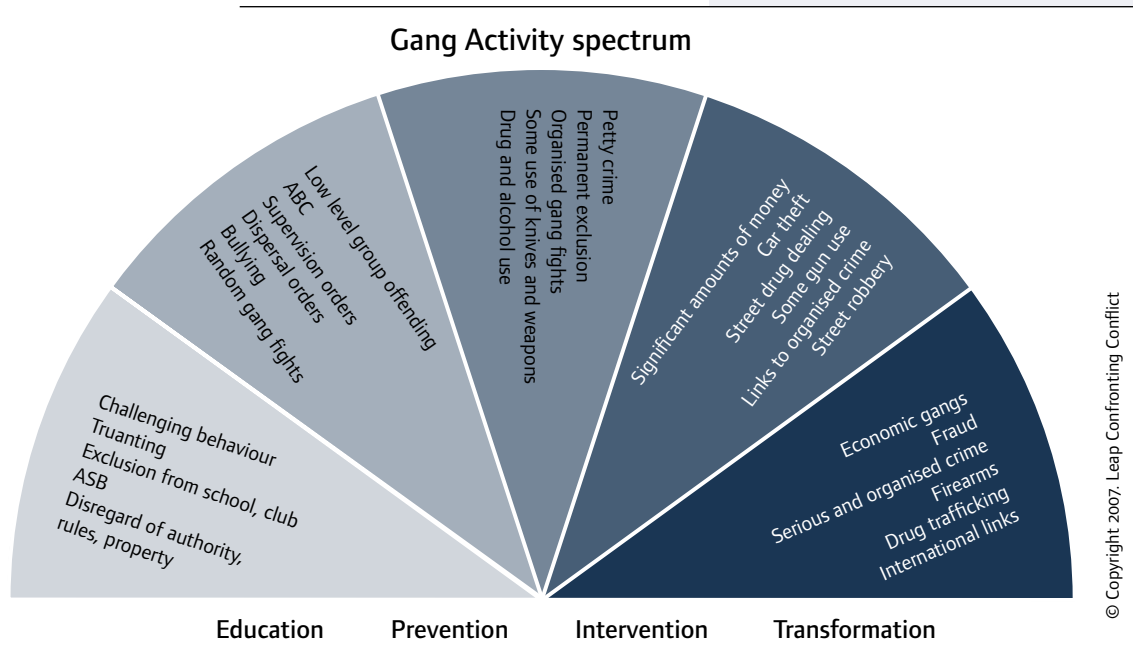
While football has historically been a key factor in the community networks of North-Liverpool perhaps more significant is the ‘*clanished as a family unit*’ characteristic of the residents noted by local historian Terry Cooke, whereby many people see themselves as part of a ‘family’ or ‘gang’ centred around local affiliations. The North-Liverpool Positive Futures project has been using football and sport in an attempt to work with many of the young people affected by this territoriality since 2004. However, the challenges they face run deep and are enshrined in the rift between two areas which come together around the Everton Park Sports Centre and Power League pitches used by the project. After witnessing a violent attack on the pitches in 2005 one volunteer explained that:

‘There is a real violent edge to the Scotty Rd (Vauxhall) and Langy (Everton) area which is centred around a drugs component and a number of big families. They have these little runners working for them who fight over areas and have a rivalry. A lot of youth workers won’t even touch this area. If you dare go to the police, they will threaten your whole family even kiddies and women. I’ve told [the Positive Futures development worker] that he really is working on an island here.’

Two rival families are said to lead the two main gangs in the area and although their territorial dispute is very localized, the issue of gangland activity and gun crime surrounding them affects the whole

area and the mood of project workers. A local community development worker explained that for some young people it has become an honour to be asked to do something on behalf of these families and that ‘*these kids don’t look up to football heroes anymore - it’s these guys with flash cars and money who run the area. These kids worship them*’.

In this context, perhaps of greater concern was the finding that 44% of survey respondents suggested it would not be easy to leave the gang because of myriad factors relating to notions



more significant though was the finding that 33% of this group felt that the gang had ‘a shared connection to and respect for our neighbourhood/territory’. This sense of local affinity was reinforced by one respondent who indicated that their gang was ‘helping people in da endz’.

Nevertheless, the social basis of this connection was perhaps underlined by the 76.5% of respondents who indicated that the gang was ‘known by many people in the area as being ‘notorious’ or having a ‘reputation’ and that 51.4% of gang members were known to carry knives and 35.3% guns. Although only 7 respondents indicated that they had themselves been the victim of an attack by another gang using weapons, the significance of reputation and notoriety also came out through the confirmation by 23.5% of respondents that in order to secure entry to the gang ‘you would have to do something to prove yourself’ and by 28% that ‘you don’t decide to join [the gang] they decide’.

This sense of the capacity of gangs or notorious figures and families to influence local social formations is also borne out by our wider research around one of the projects which facilitated the distribution of the survey in the socially deprived neighbourhoods of North Liverpool.

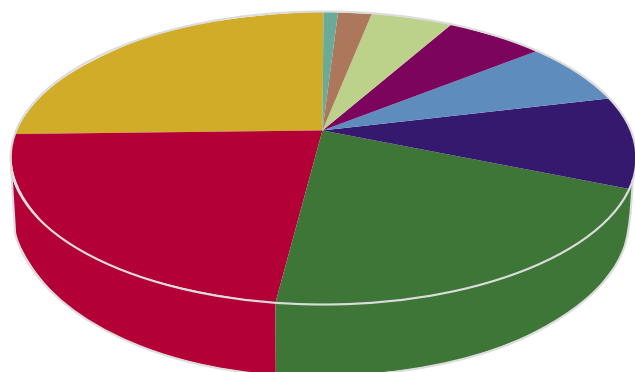
of betrayal, confidence, reprisals, friendship and loyalty entwined with forms of peer pressure, which are wrapped up with the prospect of violence, intimidation and humiliation. While these findings represent a stark concern, it was encouraging to see the willing identification of the kind of support regarded as being important in helping to escape an involvement in gang activity. Alongside the more drastic measure of moving away from the area, the provision of sports and other youth activities was the most commonly cited response, with the support of friends and family having a similar level of support.

Table 2: Factors that would help someone to leave a gang

Source of help	Number of respondents
• Moving areas	30
• Sports/youth clubs	30
• Friends	29
• Family	29
• School/education	24
• Access to activities	20
• Partner	17

In some senses this widespread support for the provision of sport and activities set the tone for further responses more directly focused on the wider role that sport could play in addressing problems associated with gangs and youth crime. Of the young people surveyed 117, or 84%, indicated that they hang around in groups socially, and it was interesting to note the overwhelming emphasis that respondents placed on sociability, having fun and playing sport in relation to what they do when hanging around with their peers.

What respondents do when they hang around



- 25% Be social and have fun
- 23% Play Sport
- 21% Muck about
- 10% Be safer in a group
- 7% Earn money
- 6% Protect the area/friends
- 5% Drink or take drugs
- 2% Fight or intimidate
- 1% Other

Outside of this more informal activity 115, or 83%, of the respondents also indicated that they participated in activities organised by groups such as sports or youth clubs in their free time. Again there was a very heavy emphasis on involvement in sporting activities within these environments with a particular focus on football and boxing as well as music.

Table 3: What organised activities respondents are involved in

Activity	Number of respondents
• Football	47
• Boxing	22
• Music/singing/MCing	20
• Other sports	19
• Youth group	14
• Basketball	12
• Dancing	10
• Badminton	4
• Swimming	4
• Rugby	4
• Gym/fitness	4
• Acting/drama	3
• Martial arts	3
• Organised trips/outings	3
• Other activities e.g. internet, movies, pubs, video games	4

What was also quite striking was the extent and regularity of respondent's involvement and interest in these activities. Of the 115 young people indicating that they attend organised activities 26,

or 23%, attend every day while a further 39, or 34%, attend a few times a week. Furthermore 66, or 58%, had been attending for more than 6 months, with 31 having attended for between one and three years and 24 for over 3 years. More than three quarters of them also attend with friends, suggesting that the more formal settings in which these activities are provided do not detract from their social appeal. Indeed while the activities in question were provided by a wide variety of organisations, with youth groups (28%) perhaps unsurprisingly most prominent among them, this capacity for long-term regular involvement highlights the potential for participants to evolve and take on volunteering and peer leadership roles, which learning from related activity programmes suggests can have profound impacts.

Mentors doing it for themselves

In 2006 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) launched its Respect Mentoring Programme: a three-strand programme designed to use 'positive activities' (in this case sport, media and music) to engage young people. The general delivery model of the programme has been to 'match' young people involved in, or at risk of involvement in, crime and anti-social behaviour with positive adult role models who, through their expertise in sport, media or music, can assist young people with project-based work and help them to develop personally and socially. The one exception to this delivery model has been found in the music strand of the programme where, in addition to 'adult mentors', the use of 'peer mentors' has also been encouraged.

In the main, the music peer mentors have been older teenage participants who, in addition to receiving mentoring from appropriate adults, have also started to offer younger participants support and advice. The logic of using peer mentors is essentially twofold. While the adult mentors have been selected in part because of their abilities to connect with young people, it is felt that peer mentors are especially well placed to build relationships with young people who may be suspicious of 'adult authority'. The fact that most of the peer mentors associated with the programme have shared the negative experiences of the 'mentees' and have moved on with their lives means their credibility as role models is all the more persuasive. It is felt that the mentees are more likely to trust peer mentors and engage with their support and advice.

The second logic of using peer mentors is based on the benefits of the role for them. In the music projects, which have begun to embed peer mentoring into their structures, there are now clear training and progression routes available for 16- to 25-year-olds who may have previously had to stop attending project activities after a certain age. Furthermore, at a small number of projects, this progression route is now being extended through employment opportunities which have been created within project structures and have seen peer mentors emerge as paid members of staff. The development of these internal 'life cycles' within projects mean they are more sustainable than previously and more plausible as sources of real opportunity for change in young people lives.

More broadly there was an overwhelming sense among survey respondents that being involved in sport and other activities had a clear role to play in keeping young people, and themselves in particular, out of trouble. 111, or 80%, of respondents felt this was the case and highlighted a variety of reasons why. Once again there was a focus here on the extent to which involvement provided opportunities to be social but this was extended to highlight the importance of the provision of constructive or purposeful opportunities with the potential to lead to a greater sense of control, direction and respect in young people's lives. Interestingly these understandings are compatible with the wider recognition of the role that access to structured, alternative education and support can play in ameliorating the risk factors related to offending behaviour.



Table 4: Reasons why involvement in activities helps keep you out of trouble

Reasons	Number of respondents
• The activities give you something to do with your time	80
• You have met new people	51
• The activities have led to other opportunities	48
• You feel more in control of your life	43
• Those involved have given you guidance and support	40
• People respect you more	34



Above (right): A soccer coach using the power of sporting heroes to educate young people.

Having established this support for the role of sport and structured activities in young people's personal development, which is reflected in the following case study, the survey turned its attention to the ways in which more young people could be encouraged to get involved in such activities.

Leader of the pack

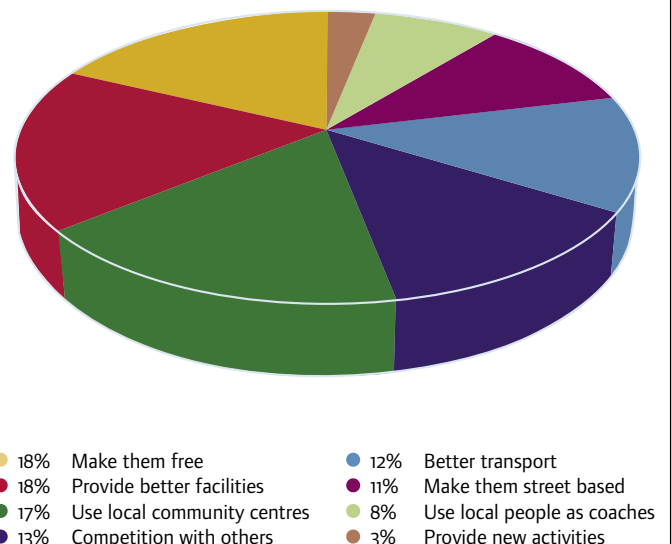
Karl is 16 going on 25 and is known by many on his estate as the 'leader of the pack'. When you meet him it is hard not to feel a little anxious and somewhat intimidated by his body language.

Recently, after being away for several months with his birth mother, Karl returned to the area with the idea of forming a 'gang' which, with the help of his associates, grew to include 60 members and began to cause significant trouble in the town, resulting in soaring levels of anti-social behaviour. Young people would brawl in the streets, terrorise the local community and fight with anyone who wasn't in the gang. A local youth worker and police officer realised that this was becoming a problem and set up a football project, which immediately engaged over 40 local young people, including Karl.

As the weekly project continued, more and more gang members were engaged. Karl's natural qualities as a leader were harnessed by making him the captain of the over-14s squad and he gained a passion for football and keeping fit, remaining cool under pressure and encouraging others to do the same. Since becoming involved in the project, Karl has gone on to volunteer at sessions with younger groups and, along with four of the other young people, has signed up to undertake an FA Level 1 Coaching Course.

Karl's gang no longer exists and, while there is still work to do, a trusting relationship between the ex-gang members, local police, youth workers and community coaches has emerged. When Fair Play League matches are taking place, several of the boys, including Karl, can often be found in the police station having a cup of tea with the officers and getting ready to go and help collect and deliver the equipment to the league venue.

What more could be done to get people involved in sport and activities

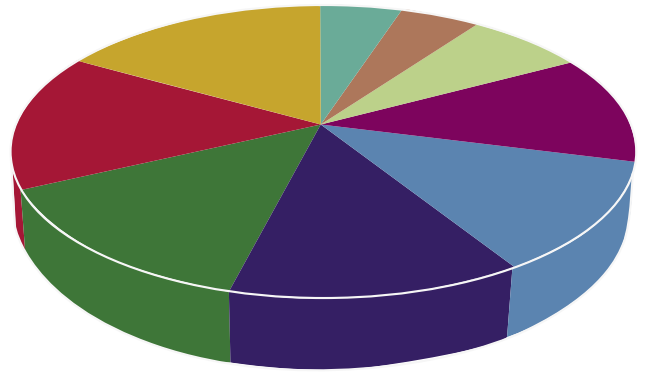


The clear focus of these responses was in relation to the provision of additional resources that would enable activities to be more affordable, accessible and comfortable. Interestingly the provision of better and accessible facilities was clearly identified as being more important than the provision of new and different activities or even the need to engage local people as coaches. This picks up on a theme we have identified elsewhere as relating to the power of sport to transform places with nothing to do into places with something to do.



Above: Laureus World Sports Academy member Mika Häkkinen working on a kart with a member of TRAX during a Laureus MotorV8 event.

Who should be responsible for organising sport and other activities



17%	Youth/community centres	12%	Schools
15%	Local sports clubs	12%	Young people themselves
14%	The local authority	7%	Police
13%	Professional sports/football clubs	5%	Churches
		5%	Parents

Space for games

In 2007, following a period of prolonged consultation with West Midlands Police and other local stakeholders, the first Birmingham City Kickz project was established on the border between the Sparkbrook and Small Heath areas of the city. Rife with territorialism, the area is well known for its associations with guns and gangs, 'postcode wars' and drug dealing. The reasons behind the area's problems are multiple, but among them is a perceived lack of positive activities for local young people and safe spaces in which they can hang out.

The project is based on the Ackers Park site which, while officially in Sparkbrook, effectively splits the two rival areas. Prior to the introduction of Kickz, the Ackers site didn't host any activities for young people in the evenings. It was used by drug dealers as a drop off point, and local young people say they were well aware that drugs were routinely left in the park for others to collect. Since the project has been established, however, the dealers have moved away. The park is gradually being reclaimed and it is starting to be seen as a place of relative safety.

Since the project's introduction, staff have adopted a strategy of 'getting in early' with some of the younger teenagers in the area. Through discussions with project participants and good knowledge of local networks, delivery staff have begun to target the younger brothers, cousins and other family members of local gang members in an attempt to stop them 'graduating' into gang activity. Through the building of relationships with local young people and provision of alternative sources of enjoyment and excitement the project is hoping to create new pathways which don't inevitably involve crime.

While not without its challenges, this project is beginning to have an impact. From a situation in which young people felt they had 'nothing to do' the project has begun to establish a reputation as a place where anyone, regardless of postcode or previous associations, can go, hang out and be respected.

The survey respondents were also invited to suggest who should be responsible for organising activities and, in a context where only 12 respondents had previously indicated that the activities they were involved in were organised by sports clubs, it is interesting to note the high proportion of young people who thought both local and professional sports clubs should be more involved.

The interest in professional sports clubs was reinforced by the high levels of interest in the possible involvement of 'sports stars' when asked about who respondents would most benefit from being involved in providing these activities.

Table 5: Who to involve in providing activities

Who	Number of respondents
• Sport stars	50
• Young people from your estate/area	32
• Coaches from local clubs	15
• Former gang members	8
• Other celebrities	6
• Your teachers	2
• Parents	2

Both in relation to this question and the identification of the young people's role models, inspirations and heroes, sport stars were the most commonly cited response as well as in relation to the question seeking to identify the single person most likely to influence their outlook. In the following illustration these responses are presented in a graphical format which presents those words which featured more often in a larger font size than those which featured less frequently. The resulting emphasis on the importance of both sports figures and family is striking.



Illustration source: <http://wordle.net/>

These findings may well reflect the contemporary interest in celebrity but it is interesting that the focus among these young people was very strongly influenced by the attraction of sporting celebrity rather than any other genre. While this highlights the positive role that the association of professional sports clubs with activities can have, in terms of ensuring the long term sustainability of provision and progression pathways the high proportion of respondents wanting to involve young people from their own area may be more significant.

Much has been made, by Government, the media and sports organisations, about the value of role models to young people. Whether that individual is a nationally recognisable football player, a local community worker or a family member, the claim has been made that individuals can act to inspire young people to lead positive lives. However, in many senses this can be related not only to the character of the individuals in question but to their public status and profession with the danger that this status is premised on envy rather than respect, vanity rather than pride. In our wider work we have found that the appeal of effective project staff and mentors often inverts the hierarchical, elitist social formulations implied by the genre of celebrity. Indeed at many of the projects we work with we have identified peer role models who are 'setting an example' which others freely choose to follow. Where young people have moved through a project and progressed to become volunteers and employees, utilising the enthusiasm and example of the 'converted', these new staff can become aspirational and realisable role models and peer mentors as illustrated in the following case study

Kilroy's Kidz

Ten years ago Kilroy was one of a number of children of a similar age living and playing on an estate in south east London. He had three younger sisters, his parents had problems with drugs and jail, so family life was not easy. Not surprisingly he started getting into various kinds of trouble and had little sense of direction.

Trained in martial arts, he had become a confident fighter (with a reputation to defend), having to fight if one of his little sisters got into trouble. 'I've done it since I was really young. I was becoming pretty dangerous, and I had been like in school, I had had fights and stuff, and I ended up beating a guy up and he ended up in a coma and stuff, and I was really scared from there, I thought I might end up in jail soon'. It was at this point that he first came into contact with the Kickstart project workers who were beginning to make contact with young people in the area. Aware of his situation, the workers started saying, 'Look, you need to look after your little sisters,' reminding him of his responsibilities to them and the need to lead by example. 'You're responsible for them, if you're carrying on like this, what are they going to think.' Finally he made the choice to move on, coming to the realisation that 'if it comes to you, it comes to you, if not, don't go looking for it.'

It was the project's willingness to understand his anger and provide support that helped him through. Since then Kilroy progressed through volunteering roles, getting awards and accreditation along the way before being given more and more responsibilities, sessional work, a part-time contract, and eventually a full-time contract and a place on a youth work degree course. Now he gets paid for something he loves doing, building two-way relationships and helping the next generation of young people growing up on the estate. Winning their trust and respect because they know he knows.



Above: Laureus World Sports Academy member Martina Navratilova with students from the Fight Back! project.

Below: Tiger Woods with his late father and role model Earl Woods.



Children from the Polisportiva project with Laureus World Sports Academy members Alberto Tomba (left), Marvelous Marvin Hagler (centre) and Marcel Desailly (right).



4. Key findings, recommendations and guidance

The findings from our preliminary enquiries would suggest some support for Leap Confronting Conflict's assertion that there are many benefits of gang membership, which include a sense of excitement, safety, status, power, self esteem and belonging¹⁴, feelings that are both important for young people to experience but which are also accessible through an engagement in sport. It is perhaps this realisation more than any other which should set the context for using sport as a potential resource to tackle the problems associated with gang behaviour. While further practice-based learning will be required to guide future interventions a number of themes have been identified through this research which might help to inform initial investments and ongoing research.

4.1 Sporting gangs, not sport v gangs

It is clear from our survey work with young people and the wider body of research evidence that many young peoples' perceptions of gang behaviour are not consistent with those which dominate wider public discussion. In many young peoples' eyes there is a sense that their own friendship groups and innocent forms of sociality are wrongly defined as troublesome and gang related and that even those who do identify themselves with gangs do so in order to secure friendship and a sense of belonging which offers protection rather than necessarily being a threat to others.

Particularly in contexts where young people have limited access to alternative sources of group activity, reward and mutual respect, sport

can be identified as an alternative and respected source of collective endeavour, approval and indeed protection. As such the key challenge is to find ways to engage young people who might otherwise be drawn to a gang lifestyle through the presentation of opportunities which have established appeal rather than activities which are new or novel. The key will be to identify and mobilise sporting activity that generates equivalent levels of excitement to that associated with gang activity since the ability to mobilise sport will be tied to its capacity to deliver a sense of danger, heroism and status. Sport's potential rests with its proximity to, rather than its distinction from, gangs and gang related behaviour.

Sporting gangs, not sport v gangs

Furthermore, in the context of the apparent fear and difficulties associated with 'leaving' a gang, which are often associated with notions of betrayal, the question remains as to whether interventions should seek to work to engage gangs as a collective group or individual members. Where gang structures and conflicts are entrenched, attempts to undermine or moderate those structures can result in confusion and a loss of status for key members. In these circumstances the provision of appropriate sports activities raises the potential to engage whole groups in purposeful activity without the need to challenge broader social structures and hierarchies as revealed in the 'leader of the pack' case

¹⁴ Feinstein, J. & Kuumba, N. (2006) *Working with Gangs and Young People: A toolkit for resolving group conflict*, JKP: London

study presented earlier in this report.

4.2 Don't 'spend', invest!

What was striking about the responses to our research from those who were already motivated by sport was the sheer scale of their commitment to an engagement in positive activities. Their desire was for regular opportunities to participate in accessible, high-quality spaces. In a context where areas of disadvantage can be characterised by a kind of 'interventionitis', with multiple programmes peddling different agendas, each seeking to achieve recognition and public relations impact, the focus can drift from the need to target long-term success factors. Rather than high-profile events and one-off branded opportunities to introduce people to new activities, the findings from our survey work and wider research suggests a need to focus on ongoing investment in:

- Regular opportunities
- Better facilities
- Local provision
- Improved accessibility

Furthermore, the desire that respondents have shown for more activities and the willing participation in the research by those with existing profiles of participation, suggest that temporary or limited access to opportunities might be counterproductive. Rather there is a need to create sustainable programmes which link to local sports clubs and local people. While there appear to be clear benefits associated with the involvement of high-profile professional sports clubs and their star personnel associated with the added cache of credibility and glamour they bring, it is the ability to embed skills among locally recognised figures which is vital. Our wider research around the use of sport as an engagement tool with disadvantaged young people is clear in its conclusion that stronger identifications among participants are achieved with peer mentors and staff who are of their area than those who are not¹⁵. Although the local rootedness of staff is not the only factor at work here, those staff who have a deep knowledge of the history of their areas, have or had a similar social background to participants – that is those who have similar 'cultural capital' – seem able to make stronger connections with the young people they work with and to command more respect.

However, the more effective projects also seem to intuitively understand the dynamic nature of the engagement process and the need to take account of individual circumstances rather than relying on more formulaic approaches. In some ways this perspective runs against the tide of more managerial approaches to the identification of models of good practice. As such, rather than presenting a blueprint for how to use sport to address the problems associated with gang behaviour our preliminary findings would suggest the need for a prime focus on creating the right environments for good practice to emerge. This will require:

- Identification of and investment in high-quality local facilities
- Long-term funding to support the ongoing provision of sessional staff
- Flexible approaches to engagement that focus on quality rather than quantity
- Ongoing assessment and reflective practice
- Realistic targets which focus on long-term protection against risk factors rather than short-term impacts on offending rates

Don't 'spend', invest!

4.3 Ten Principles of Practice

1. Acknowledge that many young people's perceptions of gang behaviour are not consistent with those which dominate wider public discussion
2. Accept that those who identify themselves with gangs often do so in order to secure friendship and a sense of belonging which offers protection
3. Utilise sports' similarities with, rather than its differences from, gangs and gang-related behaviour
4. Mobilise sporting activity that generates equivalent levels of excitement and delivers a sense of danger, heroism and status
5. Where possible engage whole groups in purposeful activity without undermining or challenging existing group structures and hierarchies
6. Focus on the provision of regular and reliable opportunities that build interest, credibility and commitment over time
7. Identify realisable goals that capture the imagination and build in structures which enable the development of progression pathways and competitive opportunities
8. Generate access to better local facilities and make them openly accessible with a sense of local control and ownership
9. Utilise high-profile sports figures to generate interest, credibility and respect but acknowledge that there is no better role model than the peer mentor who has graduated from the position of the participants
10. Ensure the ongoing capture of a range of evidence of outcomes to demonstrate project achievements

¹⁵ Crabbe, T. (2006) *Knowing the Score: Positive Futures Case Study Research – Final Report*, Crime Concern: London

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