Sports-based Programmes and Reducing Youth Violence and Crime

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Glossary of key terms

Context – the external factors which influence how individuals participate in or organise and carry out an intervention. The context affects the availability or resources and the opportunities for a project to be carried out. For example, the arrangement of key institutions for young people, such as schools, colleges, police, young offender institutions, etc. can facilitate the building of network. Interventions and their participants are embedded in social contexts characterised by dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, material inequality, racial and ethnic diversity, and perhaps gang tensions and violence.

Evidence – the range of available robust and reliable information which demonstrates the impact of a policy, public service or programme.

Indicator – a measurable characteristic or process which reflects (indicates) that change has occurred

Intervention – a planned action which aims to bring about positive change. This may aim to improve social inclusion, empowerment and equality, such as in social work. The term intervention refers to person-centred approaches which aim to change behaviour, attitudes, and so on.

Methodology – the rules, assumptions and data analysis methods which outline an approach to research or analysis. This is different to a research or evaluation method, which is a tool for collecting and analysing data.

Outcomes – the end result of a process is its outcome. The outcomes of a policy, a project or an intervention are the changes that it has caused, or is aiming to cause. This is not the same as an output, which refers to the products offered by a policy, a project or an intervention.

Participant – an individual who engages with an intervention which is aimed at bringing about change for them, such as in their behaviour or attitudes.

Programme – an on-going series of activities to affect an issue or problem. Whereas a project has a defined beginning and end, a programme may be more open-ended: an overarching programme can be composed of various projects.
Sports-based interventions and youth violence

Key Insights

Why sport?

It is widely accepted as common sense that undertaking sport can be beneficial in many ways.

Political interest and important investments in sport and sports-based youth interventions suggest that one such benefit may be to reduce youth crime and violence.

Sport can reduce youth violence and crime

This synthesis study examines evaluations of sports-based youth interventions in London and finds different types of evidence claiming that sport can indeed reduce youth violence and crime.

Sport can act as a diversionary activity distracting from violent and criminal activities and also as a hook bringing young people into contact with opportunities for achieving wider goals such as furthering their education or finding employment.

But positive and negative impacts are mediated by contextual factors

The evidence suggests that where intervention programmes can incorporate multiple agencies collaboratively they are able to access stable sources of resources for activities, can build trust between young people and institutions such as schools and the police and facilitate the improvement of young people’s skills, qualifications and behaviour.

However, disadvantaged contexts can also pose problems for obtaining a consistent stream of resources and can incorporate tensions from the streets, such as territorial battles between gangs, into intervention activities.

Caveats and recommendations

Sports-based interventions can also have a negative impact on youth violence, and this has been reported in cases of young people being referred to them by the police, young offenders institutions and schools. An awareness of the possibility of violence on programmes can aid planning to act against it.

The evidence base is also limited due to a varied and inconsistent range of sources. It is argued in this synthesis study that greater information is required about the capacity of sports-based interventions to reduce youth violence and crime in London and this must be consistently collected over time, systematically recorded and clearly analysed in order to draw strong conclusions which can give generalised insights across cases.

As a result, Project Oracle’s growing evidence base and standards of evidence will provide a much-needed source of information for future studies of sports-based interventions and youth violence.
Introduction

Over recent years, sport has become a highly salient topic in British politics and society. In particular, the Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2012 were the centre-piece to attempts to achieve elite sporting success and a lasting economic and social legacy. An aspiration to harness the broad and varied benefits of sport was epitomised in comments from then-Minister for Culture, Media and Sport in 2010, Jeremy Hunt MP, who stated that

‘Of course we want to nurture world-class talent. But above all we want to nurture the values that are common in sport, but perhaps not as common outside sport as they should be.’

Considerable investment has also been put forward to promote excellence and broaden participation, in particular through regional sport agencies in England, Wales and Scotland, and through Olympic legacy projects.

One important area where sports-based activities have been seen as a way to promote positive change is in youth crime and violence. Indeed, the suggestion that sport and physical activity can have a positive impact on young people’s lives is often intuitively accepted as common sense (e.g. Audit Commission 2009). Yet the way that positive change can be brought about is often considerably more vague.

In the light of this interest and investment in sport, there is a need to know and demonstrate what policy interventions work, and why. As a result this synthesis study asks:

Can sports-based interventions have a positive impact on levels of youth violence?
What contributes to their success?

The focus of this study will be on sports-based interventions in the London area.

There have been attempts elsewhere to clarify these questions by pinning-down and measuring the value and diverse benefits of sport, such as from Sport England and the Sport and Recreation Alliance. A body of evidence also claims that the benefits of sports based interventions are not limited to the individual but apply to wider society (Laureaus and Ecorys 2012). However, there is still little in the way of evidence to guide providers, funders and commissioners of future sports-based programmes on what works, for whom and in what contexts. The evidence linking positive outcomes of sports interventions for young people is patchy at best (Cox 2012), and not only do relatively few community based sports interventions have built in techniques for monitoring and evaluating impacts, but many of them do not have a clearly articulated theory of change or implementation strategies to explain exactly why or how they produce successful outcomes (Smith and Waddington 2004, Nichols and Crow 2004).

This report, under the aegis of Project Oracle, takes a step towards filling this gap by synthesising available evaluations of sports-based interventions in London. In doing so, it contributes to building an evidence base that can inform policy decisions and future interventions.
Project Oracle Synthesis Studies: Aims and Approach

The Project Oracle synthesis reports aim to create a better understanding of what works in youth policy. They each bring together, assess and analyse the available evidence on a particular issue. Together the studies build a library of synthesised evidence to aid providers and funders in designing and commissioning projects that have a greater likelihood of succeeding (Cartwright and Hardie 2012).

Synthesis study aims:

1. To identify which projects work, for whom and under what conditions
   Focus on evaluations of previous interventions to draw broad conclusions regarding how intervention mechanisms influence outcomes in different contexts.

2. To assess the type and quality of evaluation data currently available
   Analyse the evaluations being conducted in terms of their underlying theory, methodological approach and data collection strategies.
   Outline indicators of positive and negative outcomes.
   Identify gaps and shortcomings in the evidence base for future work.

The examination of ‘what works’ is approached here from the perspective of realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilly 1997). The realist approach is based on the recognition that social systems are open, fluid, constantly evolving and contribute to a complex social reality. Interventions proceed within a context to produce intended or unintended outcomes (Pawson 2006; Pawson and Tilley 2009). A realist synthesis of evidence involves investigating how social programmes work and this demands a focus on the mechanisms that underpin interventions and the way that these evolve in specific contextual settings. The objective of such a focus is to bring out the causal links which explain how certain factors, processes and implementation strategies lead to specific outcomes.

A realist approach to synthesis

1. Identifies an underlying theory of change
   Do the interventions aim to achieve change through an approach which is theoretically grounded?

2. Examines interventions in their context
   Do interventions have the same impact on all participant groups in all places? Which institutional and social contexts facilitate positive outcomes?

3. Is aware of interventions and contexts being open and changeable
   Do intervention providers borrow from or compete with each other? Do positive or negative outcomes create or restrict opportunities for future programmes? Can synthesis studies facilitate knowledge exchange among intervention providers and commissioners?
The Study: Sport and Youth Violence in London

The principal aim of this synthesis study is to identify if sports-based interventions can reduce youth violence in London. Keeping the outline of a realist approach in mind, to reach this aim requires addressing a series of concrete tasks (these stages will be separated across separate sections in the following pages):

1) Assessing the type and quality of evaluation evidence that is available.
2) Identifying indicators of positive and negative intervention outcomes.
3) Analysing the mechanisms underlying efficient and effective youth interventions.
   - Participants
   - Programme types
   - Contexts: institutions, social setting, resources
4) Drawing out linkages between intervention mechanisms and outcomes
   - Which participants facilitate positive outcomes?
   - Which programme types achieve positive outcomes?
   - How do contexts influence outcomes?

Furthermore, the study is also aimed at informing practitioners and commissioners of youth interventions to guide practical decision-making in both designing programme delivery and commissioning evidence based projects. To this end it will also achieve the following:

a) Identify gaps and shortcomings in the available evidence and ways of developing this further in the future.
b) Recommend good practices guidance for evaluating the range of policies, programmes and projects targeted at reducing youth violence.

A synthesis model for sports-based interventions and youth violence
Eligibility Criteria

The ‘realist’ framework is open to diverse forms of evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, that can be drawn together to help understand what does and does not lead to successful outcomes. We drew upon a wide range of potential sources, not limited to academic research papers and we did not restrict the review to evaluations that used only particular designs (e.g. Randomised Control Trials or some form of quasi-experimental methods).

The synthesis gathered material on programmes that were sports-based interventions with specified violence and/or crime reduction as one of their aims and based in London. This is certainly not a study of all projects in London, as there is a huge range of sports-based activity within and near to London which is not evaluated or does not have the necessary data to include in this piece of work. These projects present a real opportunity for further research to build on this study in the future.

The search strategy focused on locating evaluations written in English and produced after 2008. Three inter-related approaches were used:

1. **Searches of databases of published articles**: Google scholar, ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index); British Education Link; IBSS; PsychInfo; Metalib; Swetswise and JSTOR.

2. **Search of unpublished ‘grey’ literature**: Around 30 academic experts and practitioners were contacted and relevant Government and research centre websites searched. In addition, Google searches and a secondary search of the reference sections of relevant academic papers identified in the primary search were carried out.

3. **Examining online material of specific youth programme providers which had specifically engaged with Project Oracle or other large funders and providers**: Over 40 organisations were contacted for evaluation studies, experts were personally contacted to solicit unpublished studies and websites of organisations and commissioning were trawled.

Key words and descriptors for search engines were added according to the conventions of each specific database used. The key words used for the database searches are in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Search terms</th>
<th>Raw search hits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>youth “evaluation study” sports reoffending London</td>
<td>2,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>evaluation study London reducing reoffending youth sports</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSTOR</td>
<td>evaluation sports based intervention youth AND London AND violence reduction</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBSS</td>
<td>youth AND “evaluation study” AND intervention</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PsychInfo</td>
<td>intervention AND evaluation AND youth</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swetswise</td>
<td>youth AND “evaluation study”</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalib</td>
<td>youth OR young AND &quot;evaluation studies&quot; AND sports AND London</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All studies submitted were reviewed according to the screening criteria listed above and justifications for inclusion and exclusion articulated. Studies that did not specifically use sports-based interventions or which
did not have violence reduction as an articulated aim were excluded. Evaluations of projects not connected with London were also excluded from the study.

A total of 18 evaluation studies reporting on 11 sports-based programmes aimed at reducing violence in London were included in the study. Evaluations of national sports based projects such as Positive Futures, Kickz and StreetChance were also included due to their activity in London as well as other locations. An exception was also made with the inclusion of one project (2nd Chance) which was not delivered in London but in a Youth Offending Institution out of the capital. Our reason for this inclusion is that 53% of the participants would reportedly be returning to London on their release and because the report evaluates sports based interventions delivered within a secure institution.

For each report included in the review the underlying theory, the mechanisms, and support factors that contribute to the success or otherwise of the outcomes were identified wherever possible. Each individual report was analysed for reported success and/or failure, as well as the type of evaluation conducted. Details can be found in Appendix 1.

Programmes included in the synthesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme title</th>
<th>Evaluation document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Kickz Project                          | Kicks Progress Report : Monitoring and Evaluation  
Teenage Kicks: The Value of Sport in Tackling Youth Crime                                                                                       |
| Boxing Academy                         | Teenage Kicks: The Value of Sport in Tackling Youth Crime                                                                                         |
| Street Chance *                        | Street Chance Evaluation Final  
Street Chance (Year 3 Report) Impact Summary                                                                                                     |
| Met-Track                              | Overall Met-Track Evaluation                                                                                                                       |
| Newham Cultural and Sporting Programme *| Shaping Sustainable Communities through Culture and Sport  
Newham Cultural and Sporting Programme (online evaluation report on Beacon Sports)                                                             |
| Hitz Programme                         | Mayor’s Sports Legacy fund                                                                                                                        |
| Dance United                           | The Academy (3rd cohort)                                                                                                                          |
| Positive Futures **                    | Taking it on  
Putting the pieces together?  
Knowing the Score  
Kelly (2011)                                                                                                                                         |
| 2nd Chance                             | 2nd Chance (Urban Hope) Evaluation                                                                                                                  |
| Fight for Peace                        | Fight for Peace Academies in London and Rio                                                                                                          |
| Street League                         | Social Return on Investment: the London Programme                                                                                                    |

* Two evaluation reports included in the synthesis cover a number of youth initiatives including sports based initiatives (Street Chance and Newham Cultural and Sporting Programme). For the purpose of this study we focused only on the evaluation of the sports based initiatives contained within the reports.

** For the Positive Futures programme, which was rolled out nationwide but included several sites in London, we focus on the 2008 evaluation report (Taking it on). However we refer to two additional reports (published in 2006 and 2007) to inform the synthesis as all three evaluation reports are interrelated. Similarly we include the 2006 evaluation report of the Newham Cultural and Sporting Programme to inform the 2008 findings.
Sports-based interventions and youth violence

Analysis of Evidence

The evaluations of sports-based interventions which were analysed for this study vary greatly in their assessment of outcomes and the ways that they collect and process evidence. This raises problems concerning (a) how to compare outcomes of different programmes, and (b) whether we are able to draw general conclusions.

Almost all evaluations employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, but a lack of control groups meant that in all but two cases it is difficult to establish the effect of the intervention (see Case Study 1 below). One problem which complicated data collection on programme participants and control groups was the difficulty of accessing criminal history and offending data. In some studies this issue was confronted by using self-report questionnaires or examining overall crime trends.

The evidence collected has been grouped in three ways for ease of synthesis here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>Evaluations which are based on perceived outcomes, using comments and anecdotal evidence from programme organisers and local residents which were gathered without an explicit measurement or collection method. This was often presented in conjunction with other types of evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant data</td>
<td>Evaluations which have gathered quantitative and/or qualitative data on programme participants. The measurements range from reoffending rates to individually reported behaviour changes and case studies of participant’s experiences following the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative data (general trends)</td>
<td>Evaluations which compare crime rates of participants or in a specific area following an intervention with general crime trends. The use of this comparative data enables the evaluations to make an approximation of the impact of their programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, each of these methods presents opportunities and shortcomings. In particular, they do not allow for a causal relationship to be drawn between an intervention and an outcome. On the one hand, perceptions and participant data are problematic because they vary greatly from one programme to another and the questions asked in order to gather them are not always recorded. As a result it is difficult to compare across programmes or recognise what factors have caused these outcomes. On the other hand, comparing with general crime trends poses problems because it does not involve a method of controlling the multiple other factors that may have also had an impact, such as employment levels, education provision, or inequality, etc. Consequently, it is not possible to strongly conclude whether the outcome was caused by a specific programme or broader social dynamics.

The shortcomings could be addressed through use of more defined models of programme evaluation. Of course, this does not imply use of the same methods in every case, but rather explicitly stating how data is collected.
Case Study 1: Kickz Project

Kickz is a national programme, funded by the Premier League and Metropolitan Police, that uses football to work with young people at risk of offending in deprived areas. In the evaluation data crime rates on the days of the project were compared with general trends in the same area from official statistics.

This method allowed the programme providers to argue that on the days that Kickz sessions were running, the overall results for crimes often associated with young people reduced by 23% for robbery, 13% for criminal damage, 8% for anti-social behaviour and 4% for violence.

Such a method shows a correlation between youth crime and the Kickz interventions. However, it does not show whether the programme in particular caused the lowered crime rates, or whether it has contributed to a sustained pattern of lowered crime. In order to do so would require longer-term comparisons and controlling for other influential factors.

Assessing outcomes

The heterogeneous evidence base outlined in the previous section complicates the process of bringing together programme outcomes into a coherent model of what works: different programmes have collected varying types of data and employed distinct methods to do so. As a result, the definition of outcomes for this study is necessarily broad to encompass this diversity.

An intervention is said to have a positive or negative impact when it is linked with positive or negative perceptions, participant experiences or broad trends of youth violence

This definition aims to be inclusive of the diverse evaluation methods, objectives and methodological approaches found in the analysed studies. It purposely avoids use of the term ‘success’, which can vary according to a programme’s objectives and does not set objective criteria for defining outcomes as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ because the available data is too heterogeneous to fit into categories of this type.

None of the evaluations present robust enough evidence to directly establish causal links between interventions and outcomes. However, they do present some evidence to suggest correlation between sports-based interventions and positive outcomes on youth violence, at least in the intermediate time period. All of the evaluations recorded some positive impact on youth violence and crime, whereas less than half also mentioned negative impacts. This should however be viewed with caution - such a small sample and diverse types of data and data collection mean that it is difficult to determine whether this is an effect of the intervention or the method of evaluation.
Projects recording negative impacts in addition to positive ones illustrate that there can be different dynamics occurring within interventions, according to the individuals taking part and the context in which they are set (see Case Study 2 below). Indeed, there is substantial evidence in the research literature to suggest that the impact of friendship or peer influence is not always positive and can lead to unintended negative consequences in group interventions aimed at youth (Dishion et al, 2001, Dishion and Dodge 2005).

The impact of interventions varied. Some recorded perceived improvements, such as reports from schools that the behaviour and attitude of their pupils had improved. Others showed data on the percentage of participants who had recorded an improvement in their behaviour and controlling their anger. Finally, a distinct approach was to compare local youth crime rates during and after the intervention with longer-term local or national data, recording a greater rate or decline where the intervention took place. The most common negative impact was the outbreak of violence during the programme due to the behavioural problems of specific individuals or tensions between rival gangs.

**Case Study 2: Street League**

Street League uses sport, football in particular, to engage and motivate homeless and other disadvantaged people to help build confidence and extend social networks, improve health, reduce anti-social behaviour and re-offending and develop skills and goals for moving towards long-term employment, education, training and independence.

The evaluation included surveys, case studies, self-reporting and monitoring. Considerable improvement in personal development and offending behaviour was found.

However, it was also found that the programme had the unintended consequence of possible violence during practice sessions and matches. It was thought that opposing gangs would clash during the activity, illustrating how the presence of a specific social group (gangs) could alter intervention dynamics.
Analysing interventions: participants

The intervention participants for each project were those taking part. They were recruited in different ways, and recruitment strategies influenced the type of person who would take part. They could therefore potentially influence the dynamics and outcomes of the intervention.

Nichols and Crow’s (2004) categorisation of sports-based programme types can help to group the evidence according to recruitment and participant (see below). For this study, these categories provided for two types of participant to be determined: those who were referred to the programme or those who were not.

Categories of sports-based programmes based on Nichols and Crow (2004)

**Primary Prevention**: recruitment is universal and programmes operate at the level of improving community cohesion and reducing neighbourhood disadvantage factors. Participants are not referred.

**Secondary Prevention**: outreach work targets young people identified as ‘at risk’ of offending or exclusion. Participants are targeted but not formally referred to the programme.

**Tertiary Prevention**: recruitment is via formal referral by youth offender institutions, the police, schools, pupil referral units, homeless hostels, job centres, etc.

As can be seen in the chart, the evidence suggests that potential negative impacts of sports-based activities on youth violence have arisen more frequently with participants who been referred to the programme. However, the caveat that most of these programmes have also reported some positive impact on youth violence should be remembered in relation to this, in addition to the limitations of the available evidence for this study.

A tentative conclusion of the implication of this is that programmes involving referred participants may need to be more aware of the possibility of negative impacts such as violence arising. These could benefit from specific planning to prepare for and mitigate such situations if and when needed.
Analysing interventions: programmes

In general terms, there were two types of sports-based projects: those that focused exclusively on delivering sporting activity (perhaps associated accreditation and sport-specific development opportunities such as coaching), and others that used sports as a hook to bring people into a wider range of activities and achieve multiple goals. This distinction between diversion and hook programmes is based on the conceptualisation of sport-related activities from Cryer (2005).

Three conceptualisations of sport-related activities to reduce crime and reoffending behaviour (Cryer 2005)

1. **Sports as diversion or distraction**: when young people are playing sport under supervision, they are distracted from negative environments and under surveillance so do not commit crime at the same time.
2. **Sports as cognitive behavioural therapy**: inculcating bio-social values such as moral values, discipline, respect for others, teamwork, self-esteem to address factors that may cause deviant behaviour.
3. **Sports as hook**: using the salience of sports engage young persons in what can be called ‘relationship strategy’, to attract them and encourage them to adhere to programmes delivering wider interventions.

The evidence gathered for this study shows an awareness of a range of ways that sport can be used to attempt to reduce youth violence and crime. Most projects articulated what can be called a theory of change (seven in total) but only a few explained it in any detail. Those seeing sport as a diversion considered the skills required and values of sportsmanship to be a way to provide young people with a respect for rules, discipline, confidence, self-esteem and teamwork, and that these characteristics would divert them from engaging in violence, anti-social behaviour or reoffending. Programmes employing sport as a hook combined the sporting activity with additional programmes, such as obtaining educational qualifications, taking courses on leadership or accessing employment, which would introduce them to develop broader life skills and networks. As is evident here, the notion of sport as behavioural therapy ran throughout both diversion and hook-type programmes.

To achieve positive outcomes, provision of long-term support and mentoring by coaches and other staff, including opportunities for volunteering or being role models, was noted as important but reported to be difficult to obtain. A further problem noted was that when a programme had multiple aims these could cause conflict, especially with respect to the choice of recruitment method. Interventions are more likely to succeed in achieving multiple outcomes if internal tensions between aims and methods adopted by intervention programmes can be resolved. One way of doing so is by ensuring that providers and programme architects are aware of these potential tensions and how they might arise as a result of certain decisions made by them. As will be noted in the following section, these problems can be mitigated by the institutional and social contexts of the intervention.
Finally, the evidence (see chart below) appears to suggest that negative impacts have been more common in the interventions which are designed to act as a hook and link young people into further, non-sporting activities, although the small cohort size and heterogeneity of data types and sources makes drawing any such general conclusions difficult.

![Chart: Sports-based interventions and youth violence: programme type and outcomes]

**Analysing interventions: contexts**

As noted in the earlier sections, the approach of this synthesis study requires an assessment of policy interventions in their context. It is in the context that providers access the resources and participants necessary to carry out and develop their programmes. Contexts therefore provide opportunities for providers. However, they can also pose challenges which require adaptation to potential negative outcomes. The opportunities and challenges noted in the evidence from sports-based youth interventions will be examined here in more detail.

Two types of context have been signalled for this study: institutional and social. We are interested in the way that they influence outcomes by providing opportunities and challenges for interventions.

**Institutional context:**

The arrangement of key institutions for young people, such as schools, colleges, police, young offender institutions, etc. can facilitate the building of networks with sports-based intervention providers. Such networks can serve as channels for referring participants to programmes, transferring information about individuals and groups on programmes, transferring knowledge and expertise on how to engage with issues and individuals, and accessing funding and material resources such as space and equipment.
**Social context:**

Interventions and their participants are embedded in social contexts characterised by dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, material inequality, racial and ethnic diversity, and perhaps gang tensions and violence. Such contexts can provide opportunities by concentrating participants and enabling providers to build supportive networks with peers, mentors and families outside of the programme. They can also provide challenges because facilities may not be available, locally-based potential volunteers and mentors may be unavailable or unwilling to contribute, and individual and group tensions from the street may be incorporated into programme activities.

Examples of the contextual factors from the evidence base for this study are listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional context</th>
<th>Social context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional sporting bodies, (e.g. Premiership football clubs, the Cricket Foundation)</td>
<td>Local businesses and employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools and colleges</td>
<td>Ethnic communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Housing estates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local and borough councils</td>
<td>Online spaces (Facebook, Twitter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless hostels</td>
<td>Gang territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee shelters</td>
<td>Volunteers and mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the one hand, all of the interventions evaluated for this study have been carried out by providers with connections and networks with institutional bodies, in particular the police, schools and local councils. It has been found that such connections encourage the development of beneficial social capital and trust between young people and members of these institutions, in particular with the police. Connections with professional sporting bodies also provided funds and equipment for programmes, and famous sports players acted as role models for the participants. Housing estates could also provide a beneficial context by offering a low cost space for activities to take place in and a wide range of local participants for universal access programmes (see Case Studies 3 and 4, below).

On the other hand, the studies which reported negative impacts on youth violence were also based in housing estates. They found that there was a lack of adequate space for some activities, and that territorial tensions between local gangs could spill over into violence during the intervention. There were also challenges noted in four programmes regarding partnership work with the police, schools, prison authorities and referral agencies, particularly a lack of buy-in from partner agencies in the beginning and the difficulty of maintaining steady and stable contact with young persons during implementation.
Case Study 3: Hitz

Hitz is based in the heart of London’s inner city estates targeting young people aged 11-19 at risk of exclusion and anti-social behaviour. Introducing them, often for the first time, to tag, touch and contact rugby. Hitz provided participants with the opportunity to access personal and social development programmes, educational support, vocational training programmes and workforce development and volunteering opportunities.

Bring based on inner city estates meant that issues arose such as securing grass or astro-turf pitches, funding for lighting, and accessibility to public transport. The lesson learnt was that free and easy access to sessions is important, and that these should be provided in a safe environment.

Case Study 4: Positive Futures

Launched in 2001, Positive Futures is a national sports and activity based social inclusion programme. The programme operates 121 local projects in England and Wales (includes London as a one of the programme sites) and aims to help young people living in some of the most deprived communities avoid an involvement in offending behaviour.

The project has enjoyed continued funding for 10 years and this stability is telling in its development. Investment enabled the development of the human capital of the work force through rigorous staff training, support to write bids to secure additional funding. It also created safe spaces, which could be physical environments where activities could be delivered or an environment of trust and respect in which young people are able to discuss ‘risky’ subjects. In addition, the programme promoted partnerships and extended effective partnerships especially with the police in reducing crime and ASB- evidence of reduced crime during engagement with PF activities and also with YOTs and YOS.
Conclusions

Drawing out linkages: what works, for whom and in what contexts?

All of the evaluations recorded some positive impact on youth violence and crime, whereas less than half also mentioned negative impacts.

Sport can have a positive impact on youth violence and crime whether used as a diversion from crime or as a hook to bring participants into a wider range of activities, at least in the immediate time-frame. Interventions can reduce youth violence by developing trust within communities and with the police and schools, building respect, self-esteem and inclusivity of participants, distracting from violence and providing opportunities for engaging in education, gaining professional qualifications or entering employment.

Sports-based programmes can work for all participants, whether referred from another institution or participating through open choice. However, the evidence suggests that on sports-based activities potential negative implications may arise more frequently with participants who have been referred to the programme.

Contexts provide opportunities: connections and networks with institutional bodies, in particular the police, schools and local councils encourage the development of beneficial social capital and trust between young people and members of these institutions, whilst housing estates could offer a low cost space for activities and wide access to participants.

Contexts also pose challenges: housing estates may have a lack of space, territorial tensions between local gangs can spill over into violence during activities, and it can be difficult to maintain steady, stable contact and support in partnership work with the police, schools and referral agencies.

But more consistent and higher quality evaluation evidence is required.

It is difficult to draw strong conclusions about what sports-based interventions work at reducing youth violence due to gaps and shortcomings in the available evidence.

These gaps mean that programmes cannot easily be compared and generalised conclusions valid across cases cannot be drawn without signalling a few caveats.

Evaluations of programmes vary greatly in their assessment of outcomes and the ways that they collect and process evidence.

A lack of controlled evaluations means that approximate correlations between programmes and outcomes can be made, but not strong conclusions regarding whether outcomes are caused by a specific programme or broader social dynamics.
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10. Fight for Peace

11. Street League

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i https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/sports-keynote-speech
ii such as the £56 million made available from June 2011 to offer free and subsidised activities to 14-25 year olds