FIT FOR THE FUTURE

UNCOVERING THE SOCIAL VALUE OF SPORT

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SPORT+ RECREATION ALLIANCE

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Our ultimate ambition is for the contribution of sport and recreation not only to be noticed by government, but to become one of the key 'go to' solutions for combatting some of society's biggest challenges.

1

FOREWORD

Sport and recreation deliver huge benefits to communities up and down the country as every day, our millions of participants, volunteers, coaches, staff and spectators are the living embodiment of social value.

Andrew Moss

Chair,
Sport and Recreation Alliance

2015 may not have been the easiest year for sport, but in spite of those challenges in governance, finance and damage to sport's reputation, we must remember that many lives have been changed for the better through participation in sport and recreation.

These benefits can accrue over a lifetime, from when we take our first steps through to older age. Being active and engaged makes an enormous difference – to the economy, to our own physical and mental health, in addressing social isolation, improved educational attainment and in combatting crime and anti-social behaviour.

As a sector, I believe that we should do more to celebrate, articulate and quantify this value – not only to know intuitively that we bring social value, but in working harder to quantify that social value. This collection of articles is our contribution to the next stage of the debate.

We warmly welcome the focus in the Government's recent strategy for sport on the wider social and economic value that our sector and our members bring. We also accept the challenge that our sector must get better at recognising where it adds value and in gathering the evidence to support our case for investment and support.

Our ultimate ambition is for the contribution of sport and recreation not only to be noticed by government, but to become one of the key 'go to' solutions for combatting some of society's biggest challenges.

Part of our role at the Alliance is to bring thought leadership to our sector and, through projects like this, to provide a platform for others to articulate where they believe the sector works best.

This project is also about us having the bravery to tackle the challenges we face head on and to not shy away from listening to and debating with others who have very different views.

I hope that you enjoy reading this report with its diverse perspectives as much as I did.

2 HOW TO MAKE SPORT WORK

It is hard to overstate how negative sport can be when wrongly delivered. For an all too sizeable number of school children in this country sport is nothing but a pain, something they associate with misery and discomfort.

Michael de Giorgio

Mike de Giorgio is CEO and Founder of Greenhouse Sports, a London-based charity that uses sport to engage young people living in the inner city and member of the Sport and Recreation Alliance.

When she was young, Tracy had serious anger management issues. Disruptive and argumentative, at school her almost permanent rage was forever erupting in the classroom.

Her anger had a profoundly damaging effect not just on her own education, but also on those unlucky enough to find themselves sitting alongside her in class.

"I wasn't the nicest of people," Tracy recalls. *"Always angry. When something bad happened, I'd get angry and aggressive. If other kids wanted to miss a lesson, they'd get me angry, because I'd flip out and the lesson for them was over. People wouldn't stay in the room when I got angry. Coaches and teachers would leave the room. I would focus on walls. I didn't want to hurt anyone else, so I focussed on things that would hurt me."*

And then, in her last year in primary school, Tracy discovered table tennis. It is no exaggeration to say the sport changed her life. Ten years on from ranting and raging in class, 20 year old Tracy is a successful sportswoman, a respected coach and a sensitive mentor.

After a spell teaching sport in the United States, she is now a participant on the innovative Coach Core apprenticeship training scheme that Greenhouse Sports operates thanks to generous funding from The Royal Foundation. As she herself explains:

"Coach Core, coaching in America and now the Level 3 Apprenticeship have given me confidence and I have a lot of responsibility now. The kids respect me at the school where I coach. I would definitely like a job as a head coach as I can see what sport has done for me and I want to repay that to young people who struggle in the same way that I did when I was younger."

This is what sport can do: it can reconnect the most disconnected; it can give a lifelong boost to self-confidence; it can give direction to the lost. It not only delivers great pleasure and teaches us a lot about ourselves and life in general, but it also gives individuals a deep insight into their own behaviour and that of others. It teaches us how to win, how to lose and how to act in moments of stress. It is the greatest teacher.

WHEN DONE PROPERLY, THAT IS....

It is hard to overstate how negative sport can be when wrongly delivered. For an all too sizeable number of school children in this country sport is nothing but a pain, something they associate with misery and discomfort.

A recent study undertaken by Women in Sport, for example, commented on the large number of girls in Britain who hate sport and PE and who are, as a result, not getting enough exercise, with significant repercussion on their health and wellbeing.

With over ten years of active engagement with young people at Greenhouse Sports, we have learned how best to utilise the astonishing beneficial power of sport. We have learned how to unleash its healing qualities.

We have learned, in short, how to make sport work. It is not rocket science. It all starts from the person in charge. We believe that we can only offer a good sporting experience if we have the right coaches doing things the right way.

These coaches need not only to be technically strong but also to have the appropriate social and psychological skills to be able to engage with the kind of young people with whom we wish to work.
We have learned that simply having a recognised coaching qualification is not enough.
So we have created our innovative STEP framework to maximise our coaches' ability to engage with our participants by measuring their **Social, Thinking, Emotional** and **Physical development.**

We work to ensure that our programmes have the optimal effect on our young participants. Good sport programmes attract and retain the attention of young people while also offering significant opportunities to learn key skills and deliver behavioural change.

This is not an idle supposition. The crossover between sports field and the classroom can be considerable. Those participating in our coaching programmes improve and increase their school attendance, which in turn can contribute to enhanced educational attainment.

Sport can... connect the most disconnected, it can give direction to the lost.

STEP Capabilities for mainstream school and club participants

SOCIAL	THINKING	EMOTIONAL	PHYSICAL
Communication	Problem-solving & Creativity	Confidence	Agility, Balance & Coordination
Teamwork	Planning	Determination	Fitness
Leadership	Self-reflection	Self-discipline	Sporting Skill

SO WHAT DOES A GOOD SPORTS COACHING PROGRAMME LOOK LIKE?

Here are the five steps to getting it right:

One

STRUCTURE

It needs to be structured to take account of all safeguarding considerations and we need to ensure that the coaches are suitably qualified to do the role, have had suitable training and are DBS checked.

Two

EQUIPMENT AND STANDARDS

We use the best equipment and facilities available but most importantly our coaches are not only technically strong but are also able to engage with the young people they are working with in a manner that is positive and encouraging.

As Sir Alex Ferguson insists, the two most encouraging words in the English language are **"well done."** In return, we demand of our participants the highest standards of behaviour, effort and attendance.

Three

PLANNING AND DATA

Planning is crucial, with clear outcomes, and the programmes need to demonstrate a long-term impact on the group. This needs to be measured in a way that gives clear feedback to programme managers whilst at the same time allowing Greenhouse Sports to report back to its funders on its work.

Proper data on the progress of the young people benefits everyone including, most importantly, the young people themselves.

Four

COACHING

The coach must have long-term contact with the young people – they need to meet each other regularly and often. Greenhouse Sports places its coaches full time in specific schools, both in term time and during the holidays, rather than having them move around from one school to another. Furthermore we believe that it is vital to focus on smaller groups in order to make a real difference.

The more that good coaches focus in depth on participants, the more likely they are to have a positive effect on them. We must engage our young players over extended periods to maximise skills development and create a sporting habit for life.

The idea that a programme with 100 participants is automatically twice as good as one with 50 is fundamentally wrong. Success should be measured on real outcomes rather than simply focusing on the number of participants and nothing further.

Five

DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

Greenhouse Sports focuses on working with young people from disadvantaged communities. They would not normally be given the opportunity to have the high-quality coaching provision that an organisation such as ours can offer.

We concentrate our funding on programmes in the most deprived communities where existing sporting opportunities may be low and opportunities to try their hand at different activities limited.

Adherence to these principles renders each of our programmes unique and highly context specific. Greenhouse Sports' coaches develop the close and long-term relationships with participants, schools and local communities that enable them to understand and address actively both those behaviours needing change and also skills development on an individual basis.

In 2012, much was written about the expected Olympic legacy and hopes ran high. Unfortunately, many of us feel that this has not fully materialised and those high expectations have not all been met; there has not been a huge transformation in the attitude to sport in this country.

We are very good at hosting events - as we know from the Olympics, the Rugby World Cup and even the Premier League football matches that take place every week. However, if we are to realise the enormous potential in sport we need to be more than just good hosts and brilliant organisers; we need to be participating.

It is not only infrastructure that creates legacy; just as important is the development of coaches. They are the people who can develop and change the lives of the people they work with and this is where our Government's funding should be invested. Just as good Head Teachers run good schools, high-quality sports coaches develop good sports programmes.

Things need to change before it is too late and it seems like the Government is finally listening. The Government has developed a new sport strategy and Tracey Crouch, the Minister of Sport, has recently been speaking about the power of sport to change lives.

This is a big change from the view of many of her predecessors who thought that success was based purely on the number of participants. It is gratifying finally to hear a Government Minister say that we should no longer only target numbers and medals but we should also attempt to use sport for social reasons.

Sport can be used to tackle so many problem areas in society. Participation has huge benefits including the effect on health and fitness. It is a wretched indictment on our failure to invest in quality sports provision that obesity has become a problem for far too many young people in this country.

Volunteers are a very important part of sport, underpinning many an organisation. But it does not seem that this benefit extends across all social classes. We need to target those groups that are not lucky enough to have a dedicated parent involved in their child's team.

It can be done. All we need is the right sport.

Every weekend, I cycle past large numbers of young people playing sport in certain parks in London but I do not find the same to be the case in less affluent areas. Many of the young people with whom Greenhouse Sports works are from groups where parents do not have the time or ability to run their child's team and, as a result, many children lose out.

The Government should target these groups - sport can be used for development with proper, measured and concrete social outcomes. **But it has to be done properly.**

The Government's new sports strategy is a very important document. Sport England will be able to move towards a mixed economy whereby funding will be divided between the national governing bodies and those community groups that will be able to measure the impact of sport on social outcomes.

This is a big and very welcome sea-change and one that we at Greenhouse feel needs further to be encouraged.

The Government's money can now be used to target the neediest, the most inactive, those who are least likely to have the high quality provision that the many of the more affluent take for granted.

In a similar way that child benefits should be targeted towards those most in need, so the same could apply to sport funding. Sport for development is different to sport for participation and funding should be directed towards those who would not participate if the funding were not available.

But it is always best to listen to those engaged at the sharp end. Here is the testimony of a teacher who writes about a pupil who is flourishing thanks to her engagement with a Greenhouse Sports programme in her school.

It can be done. All we need is the right sport.

"The pupils I teach who play basketball and work closely with Greenhouse Sports often tell me about the positive impact it is having on their lives through playing to counselling.

I have taught Dami for two years now and have seen fantastic progress in her academically and emotionally. She used to achieve Ds and Es and now she is consistently getting As.

If Dami doesn't get an A she will retake of her own account; she actively comes to ask for work and loves to be praised. She genuinely is a joy to teach. This is in stark contrast to how she used to behave.

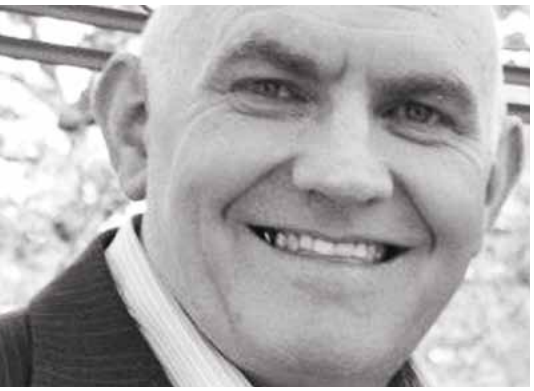
Through the help of Greenhouse Sports which has given her confidence, a purpose and leadership and Coach Carl - he has constantly mentored, counselled, dedicated his time to showing her how to accept people, let down her guard and how to respond to teachers - she has made exceptional progress."

3 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS AND THE SOCIAL VALUE OF SPORT

...thousands of 'good' stories that demonstrate the overwhelmingly positive effect that sport has on individuals and across whole communities are largely ignored by the national sports media.

Ken Cowen

Ken Cowen is CEO and founder of School of Hard Knocks, a social inclusion charity which uses sport to tackle the issues surrounding unemployment, crime and health.



It's almost as though 'sport' is becoming a dirty word these days. The constant stream of sporting highlights such as the record breaking Rugby World Cup and the stunning GB Davis Cup win, are punctuated at every point by some scandal or other, be it the horror that is FIFA governance or the covering up of dope cheats in Russian Athletics.

One frustration (amongst many) around this glut of negativity is the fact that the thousands of 'good' stories that demonstrate the overwhelmingly positive effect that sport has on individuals and across whole communities are largely ignored by the national sports media.

One exception is the annual Sky Sports documentary **'School of Hard Knocks'** (SOHK) which provides a snapshot of the work that the SOHK charity delivers to help its beneficiaries **'realise their potential, take responsibility and contribute more fully to society'.**

We are best known for our work with adults who are long-term unemployed by combining rigorous sporting activity with a carefully designed class-based curriculum. However, in January 2015 the charity launched a new programme, **'SOHK for Schools'** for children aged 13-16 years old.

Most of the children we work with are struggling for motivation and a sense of engagement with school; others are in need of increased personal confidence and a sense of well-being. Others still are on the cusp of permanent exclusion from mainstream education. Many are a combination of all three.

The courses for adults are necessarily short (just eight weeks) as our aim is to get participants into full-time employment as quickly as possible, although ongoing mentoring is offered as post-course support.

Our approach to working with children is very different in respect to the length of time we work with them which is one session per week, every week of the school year from year 9 through to year 11. The essential thinking however, is the same; to use sport – specifically rugby and boxing – as the means of personal transformation.

The results of an independent study at the Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) Department of Forensic Psychology suggested that the success of SOHK delivery is founded upon three well-established psychological principles: **self-control, social bonds and self-efficacy.**

SELF-CONTROL

Consider for a moment what happens every weekend in the inner cities of the UK when people, for whatever reason, square up to each other with violent intent. The outcomes are seldom positive.

A desire not to lose face - especially when fuelled by alcohol or even the encouragement of bystanders – all too often leads to serious injury, possible imprisonment and the resulting loss of employment or at least a loss of prospects.

This isn't a small problem in our country: in the year ending June 2015, the police recorded **26,535 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, a 4% increase compared with the previous year** (Source: Office of National Statistics).

Now consider what happens when a defender playing Rugby Union lines up their ball-carrying opponent. To the casual or uninitiated viewer, rugby can appear anything but controlled at this point of contact. That would be a complete misunderstanding of what is actually happening.

Even before that moment of 'violent' collision, both players are thinking about what needs to be done in order to serve the overarching goal of their respective teams: the ball carrier is considering how to manage his body through the tackle in such a way that the ball is presented towards his own team mates, thus giving them every chance to maintain possession.

The defender is thinking about completing the tackle and then, in accordance with the law of the game, releasing the player he has tackled and then getting out of the way despite the almost overwhelming urge to do otherwise and get hold of the ball!

Do rugby players manage to do this perfectly? Of course not! However there is a discipline and thinking process that is coached into the minds of players that for the most part trumps the desire to transgress.

When participants go through the SOHK course, we are encouraging them through the rugby coaching to recalibrate their responses to those moments of confrontation with a disciplined mindset. This comes through repetition and practice, just like most learned behaviours.

Interviewing SOHK course graduates in Glasgow more than six months after they finished, Kate Thompson, GCU, found this newly accessed sense of self-control to be a recurring theme among the cohort.

One participant said:

> *"I'm not as angry as I used to be... I don't need to voice every opinion... I don't get as agitated.... it's down to that [SOHK]."*

Another said:

> *"It gave me control back. I think if SOHK hadn't come along then,I don't know..."*

The early evidence is that this approach to consciously use the physicality of the sport to increase self-control is working in SOHK for Schools where there has been, in just two terms, a 71% reduction in referrals for behaviour among the most disengaged year 9 pupils.

We encourage participants to recalibrate their responses to those moments of confrontation with a disciplined mindset.

SOCIAL BONDS

It never ceases to amaze me how quickly, within weeks of joining a course, SOHK participants become such a close-knit group. Even this week when coaching a session, I brought the lads together and asked what they had learned from the morning's session.

Hoping for some feedback even vaguely to do with rucking, I got something far better when someone said: *"That we are becoming a team."* Three weeks earlier, most of the group had never met each other before. How does this happen? Part of the answer lies in creating a corporate sense of purpose.

We give participants on our rugby courses a somewhat sobering challenge: *"In eight weeks time, even if you have never held a rugby ball before, you are going to play a game against an established team."* This really focuses the mind and, more often than not, produces the goods in rugby terms.

The real and lasting change comes however in the creation of powerful and positive social bonds among the players as they realise that the only way to meet this challenge is to work together. To become a team.

Some participants have immense and complex barriers standing in the way of where they want to be in life. One such person is Adam who went through a SOHK course in 2014: *"For me, it has gone a long way in terms of building new friendships. With rugby came true acceptance even for all my faults. It gave me a sense of belonging and with that, a sense of purpose as well."*

Andy in Glasgow said: *"SOHK helped me get back control of my life and gave me something to belong to – it's like a family."*

Of course this is not a unique claim - there is no end of evidence across all team sports that shared powerful experiences in sport, be they positive or negative, create strong bonds.

One of the challenges we make to participants is to take hold of that new found appreciation of these social bonds and apply it to other areas of their lives: their neighbours, their families, their friends and, eventually, their colleagues.

> *"I brought the lads together and asked what they had learned from the morning's session. Someone said "that we are becoming a team."*

SELF-EFFICACY

"I had nothing to wake up to in the morning. So I was just sitting about the house with no money, not really being able to do stuff for myself... I used to sleep till 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon, because I didn't feel like there was anything to get up for in the first place."

- One former participant wrote about life before the course.

This experience is not untypical. Many, if not the vast majority of, SOHK participants are disengaged and consequently feel utterly disempowered. A lack of self-belief is a recurring theme among both age groups we work with.

In many ways, this is our biggest challenge, as that lack of belief combined with a lack of structure and sense of purpose becomes a huge barrier to employment. The third psychological principle that SOHK is based upon therefore is that of self-efficacy.

This is essentially about an individual's belief in his or her ability and capacity to accomplish a task or to deal with the challenges of life.

It is vital that our coaches and staff truly believe this and, generally, in human potential as this key message is constantly repeated through every aspect of delivery: *"You are capable of achieving far more than you can imagine, if you put in the necessary amount of work."*

The sporting element of our programmes reinforce this. In rugby especially, participants are usually able to reflect back on the journey they have made and see remarkable progress in a relatively short period of time.

After the initial 'high' that comes from the first week of rugby-related games that are essentially high octane and 'fun', there is usually a temporary 'dip' in terms of sheer enjoyment as they grapple with the fundamentals of passing backwards to take the ball forwards! By the time they have played their final game however they can see the progress and this enables the coaches to say to them:

Remember what you were like just eight weeks ago and see what you have done today! If you can achieve this much on a rugby pitch in just two months, can you imagine what you are capable of achieving in the next two years in all areas of life?

This is an incredibly empowering message that becomes deeply embedded in the minds of participants as they continue their life's journey.

This is more than a 'pre-match' motivational talk however; we have a very clearly defined 'SOHK psychology' that is applied to every coaching session, classroom session and one-to-one conversation which ensures that we go way beyond that of mere diversionary activity.

A key part of this is the promotion of a 'growth mindset'. A fixed mindset assumes that a person's situation is fixed and can't change; therefore there is no point in making an effort to change at all. With a growth mindset, the assumption is that things can change and that skills can be both acquired and developed.

Here the individual acknowledges the choice they have in everything they do and the responsibility they have for their own individual situation. In other words, realistic ambitions can be achieved with hard work and effective, deliberate practice.

Programmes Manager Nathan Persaud said:

> *"At SOHK, we challenge fixed mindsets from the outset. Within the sports coaching sessions this can be put across in fairly robust terms but in the one-to-one conversations we can do this a little less confrontationally.*
>
> *Both settings enable participants to get an awareness of where they are holding themselves back by having a fixed view of something."*

When a participant starts to access this mindset, through constant coaching and practice on the sports field or in the boxing gym, it slowly begins to take root in other areas of where they start to take responsibility and work that bit harder. Their sense of self-efficacy begins to grow because they are getting praise and positive feedback.

The day-to-day reality of course is not always that neat. Many people we work with have multiple and often complex barriers between where they are now and where they want to be.

One year 9 pupil who was incredibly quiet and seemed more or less disinterested in the weekly rugby sessions recently opened up to the coach/mentor. It transpired that social services had removed him from his own home and placed him into temporary foster care. He said: *"School of Hard Knocks is the only thing in my life I look forward to."*

This is at once gut-wrenchingly sad, but also hugely encouraging. While we are the first to admit we are ourselves still on a steep learning curve, we know that we are on to something that works. A lot of care, a lot of discipline and a lot of sport - it's not rocket science!

4 THE SOCIAL VALUE OF SPORT: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Whether it's the fun, the challenge, the camaraderie or simply just a couple of drinks after a fixture, sport has an enormous role to play in enhancing an individual's emotional or physical fitness.

Ron Tulley

Ron Tulley is Head of Development at England Boxing, which is the national governing body for boxing and a member of the Sport and Recreation Alliance.

Don't get me wrong, I love elite sport. I cry when we win gold medals and see our athletes on winning stages. However, in a career spanning 30 years, I have found that I am more motivated by the power sport has to do even more wonderful things with people and the communities in which they live, than the lucky few who get to become world champions.

Thankfully the world of elite sport and sport for development are not mutually exclusive. Currently I work in developing grassroots boxing and I recognise the enormous positive effect a role model like Nicola Adams has by encouraging women to give boxing training a go, or even just to do some kind of fitness work.

Over the past 10 years, British Cycling has experienced a surge in participation, which corresponds with its increased medal count. Maybe if I had been an elite athlete I would have thought differently, but I am far happier to use sport as a medium to improve many different aspects of life and living in communities through sport...and I was never that good at any sport anyway!

I graduated as a PE teacher from Jordanhill College Glasgow in 1982 and started my career as a teacher in Bootle, Merseyside in the autumn of the same year. In those days when people asked what I did for a living, I used to say that I was a PE teacher or possibly a sports teacher.

I soon started to change my answer. Instead, I told them I was a teacher of young people, with expertise in sport and PE. That I was learning how to use my expertise to be a developer of young people's minds, as well as their bodies.

Two fabulous teaching colleagues encouraged me to take part in weekend camps with pupils who were disrupting lessons and not doing well. While walking in Snowdonia, camping and burning campfires looking to a beautiful sunset across Anglesey, it suddenly dawned on me that the students from the weekend camps had been confiding in me; telling me about their behaviours, aspirations, pressures, lifestyles and anxieties.

Strangely, I never had those conversations while teaching my scintillating badminton lesson back in the school sports hall.

SPORT AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

While I agree with a great deal of Matthew Syed's **'The Myth of Talent and the Power of Practice'** for many of us the notion of 'ingredients' such as motivation, coaching, role models etc. were not there during our formative years.

No matter how many hours of practice we put in, worrying about the UK Sport's Podium Potential athletes wasn't at the forefront of our minds. So for the vast majority of the population, sporting participation is not going to lead to elite performance.

Whether it's the fun, the challenge, the camaraderie or simply just a couple of drinks after a fixture, sport has an enormous role to play in enhancing an individual's emotional or physical fitness.

We hear daily about an **"obesity crisis"** which has increased the number of people diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and numerous heart conditions. We've also learnt that the NHS will be unable to cope with the surge in patients suffering with conditions like these, if the next generation become increasingly unfit.

So apart from the many benefits of regular exercise, the Government's **New Strategy for an Active Nation** presents a comprehensive economic argument which focuses on using physical activity to improve people's health. Many clinical commissioning groups have already recognised the benefit that sport and exercise has and diverted funding to sport-related projects. This will hopefully prevent disease and lead to less absence at work due to sickness.

National governing bodies have been surveyed and rewarded on how many people are actively playing their sport; a very obvious incentive for sports to follow a health agenda. But as this essay will discuss, sport and physical health is only one avenue to follow. Our country finally has a national sport and health policy, following the release of its cross-departmental sports strategy.

In order to showcase their commitment to getting more people physically active, why don't the Minister for Health and the Sports Minister run the first mile of the London Marathon to thank those who have ran those tortuous 26 miles to raise millions of pounds for health charities?

Many people argue that very physical sports, or sports where there is a great deal of repetitive action, can affect joints and lead to poor health. However, evidence would suggest, all things being equal, that moderate exercise in our older years is indeed very good for our health.

I do believe that we are better educated about sports and activities. Many sports help the body to stretch and build strength, including yoga, which could be used instead of pharmaceuticals to treat the effects of competitive sports.

Sport... can hopefully prevent disease and lead to less absence at work due to sickness.

SPORT, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Only in the last few years have we started to explore the benefits of sport and exercise for people with mental health conditions.

Whether it's famous athletes, performing regularly, who struggle to cope with the stresses of being in the limelight, or the ordinary citizen suffering from depression, stress or anxiety, it would seem that sport and exercise has a positive role to play.

Recently, there has been an increase in the amount of case studies which cite boxing training as a particularly effective activity for people with mental health conditions, we are very proud of this fact.

Such were the improvements of an individual who had a mental health problem after a series of training sessions at the Empire Fighting Chance boxing gym in Bristol, that the club now works closely with an agency who directly refers patients to the gym.

Many patients, as a result of medication, suffer tiredness, weight gain and experience poor body image and low self-esteem. One individual reported living a *"passionless existence"*. However, after regular attendance, participants at the Empire Boxing Chance said they had more focus, and clearer thoughts. They also experienced less anxiety, were more determined and more relaxed.

While boxing clearly had a positive effect, we are not entirely sure why. Boxing gyms tend to be fairly rigid, with a more autocratic style of coaching. Following instructions rather than having to make your own choices is one suggested reason as to why boxing is so effective.

The Head Coach at the Empire Fighting Chance club said: *"The boxing sessions seem to provide some structure to an otherwise un-structured week."*

It is good, therefore, that the new national sport and health strategy incorporates mental wellbeing as well as physical health as one of the five key outcomes that will determine the success of sport in the UK.

We are very proud that a number of case studies surrounding the benefit of sport and people with mental health conditions cite boxing training to be effective.

SPORT AND CRIME REDUCTION

If you are lucky enough to visit one of the 904 affiliated boxing clubs across the country, you are almost certain to hear stories about individuals who used the sport to steer clear from a life of crime.

These individuals will tell stories of how they had already been too well acquainted with the local constabulary before they found the boxing gym. They will also tell you about the friends they made within the club and the discipline of the sport.

How the respect demanded of opposing boxers, coaches, judges and referees led them to become more reasonable, mature and very importantly law abiding citizens.

In 2015 the All Party Parliamentary Group for Boxing published **The Right Hook**, a report which looked into the effects of boxing on individuals and communities. The report details many examples of good practice and provides more detail than the somewhat lazy comment that *"boxing keeps kids off the streets."*

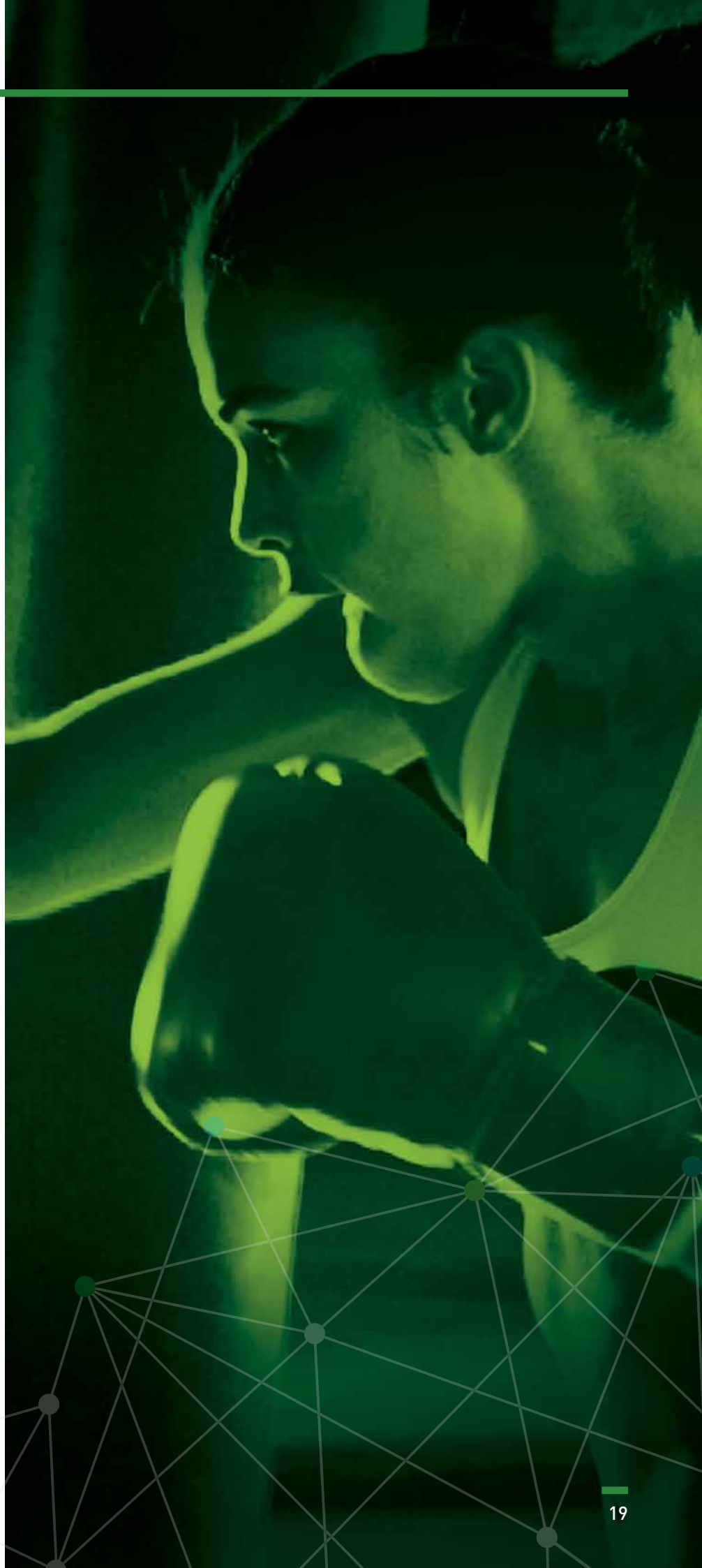
Incarcerating kids also keeps them off the streets, but I would like to think that boxing is a more effective means of rehabilitating offenders or potential offenders than simply locking them up.

Other sports provide evidence of how involvement in their games and activities keep people away from breaking the law.

Involvement in organised sports has a beneficial effect, individuals learn to abide by rules and codes of conduct in order to participate. Improved behaviour is a result of learning, through sport, how to compete and cooperate with others while playing within the rules.

Leadership roles in sporting activity (i.e. coach, umpire or referee) have also been proven popular when used in collaboration with crime prevention projects.

During my work with **Sports Leaders UK** many courses ran in prisons and young offenders institutions. Improved behaviour came as a direct result of accepting responsibility for oneself and leading other people in a safe and purposeful activity.



Cheshire Police invested in sport by training some of the more sportier members of their force to be tutors, with sports leader's qualifications. The officers then targeted notorious estates by training parents and teenagers, who lived there, how to lead safe activities for children and youths over a summer holiday period.

The police recorded a **22% reduction** in **nuisance phone calls** on that estate for the same period in the previous year.

Given the cost of keeping someone in prison, it would seem we also have a very good economic argument for using sport to combat anti-social behaviour.

It is the involvement in organised sports, where individuals need to learn to abide by rules, that has such a positive effect.

SPORT AND EDUCATION

When I graduated with a degree in PE in 1982, there were very few degrees related to sport or activity. Many PE teachers used their degrees to take up other sport-related careers.

Thankfully we now have specialised degrees in all matters of sport; sport science, sport development, sports injuries, sport and the law, sport and business, sports journalism. GCSEs and A-levels in sport and physical education are also very popular in schools and colleges.

The growth of academic sport degrees has been mirrored by a growth in more vocational qualifications. Subjects such as coaching and leadership, where the ability to lead people in a safe, sporting and recreational activity is assessed, have also become more popular.

I look forward to contributing to a new sporting apprenticeship led by **Street Games** aiming to equip a new cohort of students trained to work in the sport for development sector.

The UK has recently hosted sporting events such as the Olympics, Commonwealth games and Rugby World Cups. Schools have been inspired by the multicultural events, which bring many nations together and as a result have investigated subjects such as languages, cultures and traditions of competing countries as part of an extended curriculum.

"**Healthy mind with a healthy body**" is a well-known saying that many teachers I have worked with would endorse. Whether this is due to increased oxygen to the brain, or the release of endorphins it would seem that those who mix sport and academic study have an advantage.

Organisations such as the **Youth Sport Trust**, **Sports Leaders UK** and **Street Games** have all produced training material for young people with the aim to learn through the medium of sport. Many of these programmes have been

designed to counteract prejudice within society. **Sainsbury's School Games** has become more than a celebration of elite young athletes and is now a much more inclusive sporting festival.

Research into what employers are looking for in young recruits suggests that they are seeking much more than academic qualifications. Communication, motivation, organisation and leadership skills are in demand. Sport and development qualifications have been enhancing those skills for many years.

SPORT AND THE FUTURE

Involvement in sport, either as a participant or as a leader, has enormous benefit on health, community, and education. Sport also benefits the country as a whole and the wider society we live in.

A nation with less crime, that is healthier, better educated with the skills required to run successful businesses, therefore creating employment, would seem to be a project well worth investing in.

So I am therefore delighted that the Government's new sports strategy has such a cross-departmental focus. I hope it will help bring more fantastic, high-profile festivals such as the Olympics to our shores, but also embrace every benefit of sport and recreation so that every citizen in the UK can benefit from it.

The Government has now promised a joined-up approach to utilising the benefits of sport. It is now the time for all stakeholder organisations to join up their efforts with the government to ensure the entire population has an equal opportunity to take part in sporting participation as an active participant, volunteer or spectator.

5

SPORT IS DEAD!.. LONG LIVE SPORT!

At 10.30am on Thursday 5th November 2015, at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium in North London, sport for sport's sake, was pronounced dead. Not by a politician, not by a bureaucrat, but by one of our greatest ever athletes.

Chris Grant

Chris Grant is CEO of Sported, a free membership organisation that supports community sports clubs and groups across the UK that deliver sport for development.

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson's new role as Chair of UK Active – at whose annual summit she made this startling assertion – provides a clue as to what she meant. Indeed, later that same morning, Jennie Price, CEO of Sport England, made the same point by putting up a slide showing a smaller circle, labelled **'sport'**, within a larger one: **'activity'**.

Tracey Crouch was there too. She wasn't able to say much, in advance of the publication of the Government's new Sports Strategy, but if she had been seized by the desire to storm the stage during Jennie's presentation (driven perhaps, by a cognitive dissonance for a life-long Spurs fan of having to behave at the Emirates), she might have drawn an even larger circles, surrounding both sport and activity, and labelled outcomes **'physical health'**, **'mental health'**, **'individual development'**, **'social and community development'** and **'economic development'**.

A few weeks later, when it was finally published, the Minister's foreword to the strategy definitively hammered the final nail into the coffin of *sport for sport's sake* as the motivating force of Government policy: *"It is these outcomes that will define who we fund, what we fund and where our priorities lie in future."*

Whether or not this feels like good news is a matter of perspective. Those of us who are deeply in love with our sport or all sport; those who, like me, can't walk past a primary school rounders match without wanting to join in – or at least stopping to see if the next batter can smack the ball out of the park – might be tempted to see this change of course as a true bereavement.

But when we step off the pitch or out of the aerobics studio and take a look around – not as sports lovers but as citizens – we see that our country is at a crossroads: facing immense challenges which will, over the coming few years, come to define us.

Challenges relating to community cohesion; to education and skills; to the load on our National Health Service; to our role and reputation in the world.

"In what way exactly is THAT a reason to be cheerful about this new direction in sports policy?" I hear you ask.

The answer is that there is no single sphere of our national life which can compete with the positive power of sport to make a real difference across this range of critical challenges. Paint a picture of a successful, healthy and happy United Kingdom in 2030, and it will be illuminated by the bright colours of sport.

If, however, sport fails to assert itself as one of the best levers we have to achieve success at individual, community and national levels, the future looks much, much bleaker.

There is no single sphere of our national life which can compete with the positive power of sport to make a real difference.

Most of the people I meet who are leaders in sport care deeply about the state of their community, their nation and improving young people's lives. Ultimately, we get to choose how to respond to the new strategy: we can dig our heels in; protest that *"we're already doing it"* and hope that the storm blows over.

Or we can move forward with confidence and determination, understanding that, between us, we are holding a set of assets which, if deployed well, will deliver far greater benefits than we have squeezed from them up to this point. Ironically, by shifting the focus away from the narrow pursuit of raw numbers of participants, one of the potential rewards for all of us will be the joy of seeing millions more people fall in love with sport and activity.

The Active People Survey is on its way out, and I'm not going to wave a red rag by quoting any specific examples. However, the truth is that even some of the most-played sports have been experienced by a far smaller proportion of the population than would have a good chance of enjoying them if they were presented in the right place at the right time by the right people.

Yes, we have already seen promising innovation from some established sports bodies; the wider leisure and activity industry; the newer charities, such as StreetGames and Access Sport and many of the 3000+ small, hyper-local clubs and groups which make up our membership at Sported.

Our challenge and our opportunity now is to connect these bright lights and to take them as the starting point for a re-imagined community sport system.

One which finally does away with the limiting assumptions about who plays which sport, and who doesn't; many of them the remnants of class structures and prejudices which are well beyond their use-by dates but remain so prevalent in sport that most people don't even notice they're there.

So we need to get our own houses in order. At the same time there is another major challenge to be overcome before sport and activity take their rightful place in our national life.

PROVE IT!

Chairing events such as the Beyond Sport Summits in London, Glasgow and Philadelphia, as well as conferences on the theme of Sport for Development in the Netherlands and around the UK, I've asked many crowded rooms the same two questions:

1. **Is sport an important part of the solution to the wickedest challenges facing individuals and communities?**
   (A sea of hands goes up).

2. **Is sport recognised as such by policymakers and funders?**
   (Almost all the hands go back down).

Of course you could see the Government's strategy as proof that we've overcome this challenge.

Unfortunately, for that argument to stand up, we would need to see policymakers across the whole of Government instinctively turning to sport as a tool to help them achieve their various objectives. Despite the Prime Ministerial introduction and the contributions to the strategy from other Departments, we're still some way away from such a situation.

And it's not just policy makers who need to be convinced. Even those tasked with on-the-ground delivery of those outcomes which are closest to the heart of what sport can deliver remain largely oblivious to the powerful work already being done in the communities that they're focusing on by clubs and groups using sport and activity to engage their target groups.

At the recent **Whole New Ball Game** conference, hosted by Substance, the Director of the Department for Communities and Local Government's Troubled Families Unit remarked that their local programmes – whose combined budget is not much less than the entire Exchequer contribution to Sport England – had rarely connected with sporting organisations.

This despite the fact that most readers of this essay could point to multiple ways in which sport can capture the attention of otherwise **hard-to-reach** individuals. How it can bridge generational divides; how it can build the qualities and skills that help people turn away from destructive behaviours. How – in short – it could and should be one of the most potent tools for a unit such as this.

That same conference – along with conversations taking place in all four home nations, primarily driven by relatively new Third Sector organisations like my own – did confirm that we are finally waking up to the need to be able to back up our claims about the power of sport with robust evidence.

At last, we're following the lead of organisations and networks in education, social care and other sectors by identifying measurement scales and tools that are trusted by ministers and officials.

> We are finally waking up to the need to be able to back up our claims about the power of sport with robust evidence.

In England, the Sport for Development Coalition, which includes funders such as Comic Relief and Laureus, pioneering delivery organisations such as StreetGames, Access Sport and Greenhouse Sports, and network organisations like Sported and London Youth, has recently developed a shared outcomes and measurement framework.

Presented in the form of a **'how-to'** guide for those wanting to evidence the impact of their work, the framework encompasses not only the direct benefits that sport can deliver for individuals, but also the positive social impact associated with increased community cohesion, employability and so on.

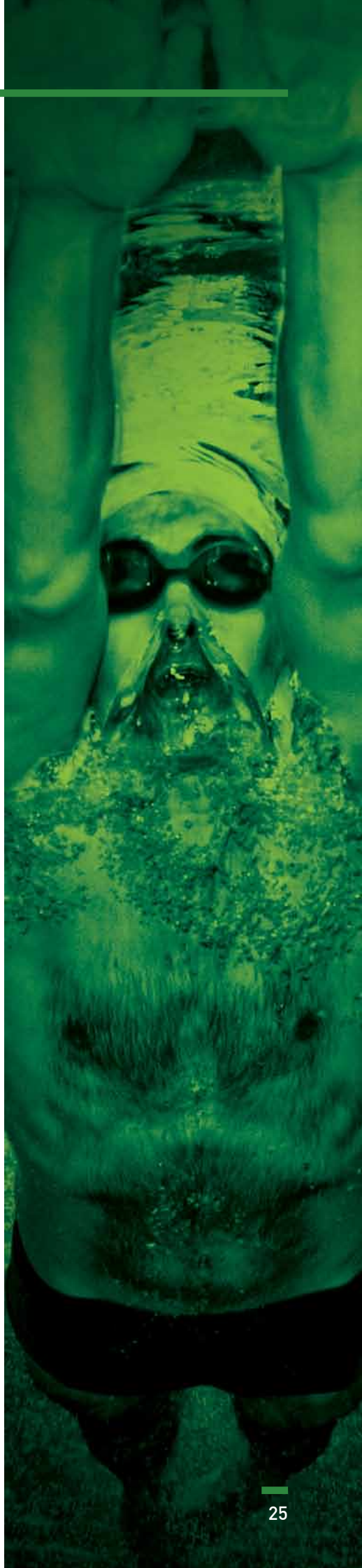
This latter area of social impact was the focus of research commissioned by Sported in 2012, and published under the title 'Sportworks'. Looking at the participation of more than 300,000 young people in Sport for Development programmes mainly delivered at hyper-local level by the types of small, volunteer-led clubs and groups which form the bulk of Sported's membership, the study concluded that the average cost saving to society per young participant amounted to more than £4000 per year.

This figure was calculated on the basis of the reduced risk of these young people succumbing to ill-health; getting involved in crime and anti-social behaviour or experiencing other negative outcomes. At Sported, we believe that being able to demonstrate the associated reductions in the burden on the NHS, the criminal justice system and other public services is what will capture the attention and support of stakeholders with access to far larger budgets than those traditionally accessed by sport.

The findings of this research have been underpinned over the last three years by more than 300 organisations, which have used the Sportworks tool to calculate the impact of their own programmes.

Groups as disparate as Britwell Youth and Community Project, which put Sportworks data at the heart of a successful Big Lottery bid, or Brentford Football Club Community Trust, which included the Sportworks data associated with its programmes in the successful planning application for the Club's new stadium, have demonstrated the benefits of a structured approach to proving the value of what they do.

In 2016, Sported will introduce **Sportworks 2.0** in the form of an easy-to-use tool, designed to produce reliable evidence of the social return on investment of Sport for Development across the whole of the UK.



BUILDING A WORLD-CLASS COMMUNITY SPORT SYSTEM

Sport is definitely not dead. On the contrary, we're raising our levels of ambition; applying evidence-based approaches to successful delivery; working together, and speaking with a unified voice to educate and engage decision-makers and funders at local and national levels.

We could find that we're entering our prime, and that across the four nations of the UK we are capable of building a community sport system that becomes the envy of the world.

In Olympic and Paralympic year, we can be encouraged by the fact that the top of our sporting pyramid has already undergone a similar transformation. Team GB won one solitary Gold Medal in the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics, and finished 36th in the medals table. Just 12 years later, in Beijing, we took 19 Golds and ranked 4th.

So how was this achieved? Many of the answers are in the list three paragraphs above this one (heightened ambition; evidence-based approaches etc.).

What has underpinned and sustained the turnaround has been a powerful change of attitude and behaviour amongst those running the performance programmes. Most of them now display an unflinching determination to recognise what doesn't work and change it; a remarkable willingness to share the secrets of success across sports, and a distinct lack of ego when it comes to letting go of territory or resources if the job can be done better elsewhere.

We are capable of building a community sport system that becomes the envy of the world.

When some of the principles underpinning this success were first introduced, many of them were resisted.

However, they are now accepted as normal and, who knows, they may carry us to becoming, in Rio, the first ever nation to match its Paralympic and Olympic home games performance four years down the line.

Maybe, by 2020, the rest of the world will have caught up with our performance programmes. However, if we're prepared to raise our game in community sport, any disappointment in Tokyo will feel like an irrelevance in the context of the emergence of the UK as a nation which fully understands and harnesses the power of sport to enhance the lives of individuals and communities.

Let's do it!

6 FIT FOR THE FUTURE: TELLING YOUR STORY

Sport and physical activity is increasingly recognised as a force for change in dealing with social issues and economic disparity.

Liz McMahon

Liz McMahon is Managing Director of Madison Muir, which offers strategic advice for brand governance, marketing and sponsorship/licensing programmes. Liz is also a member of the Sport and Recreation Alliance board.

We all know that sport and physical activity can be a positive factor in effecting behavioural change and helping address social issues, but we need to talk about our good work, the training and skills we help participants develop, the social understanding and cohesion sport and recreational activities can help develop.

"Exercise helps youth beat bullying" says the headline of a recent article in The Leisure Media. Research published in the October 2015 issue of the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Youth Psychiatry (JAACAP) reports that *"exercising four or more days per week is associated with a 23% reduction in both suicidal thoughts and attempts in bullied US adolescents."*

Furthermore, *"seven out of ten young people in the UK have reported being bullied on-line"* and research done by the NSPCC found that bullying can contribute to academic struggle, low self-esteem, depression and self-harm. Sport can play a role in helping young people build self-confidence.

But the sport and recreation sector is not as effective as it might be at talking about the good work it does and promoting this to others.

This means organisations could be missing out on new sources of funding, innovative partnerships and recognition of its contribution to positive change.

> The sport and recreation sector is not as effective at talking about the good work it does.

The following are some thoughts on what you might do to address this and be fit for the future:

One

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

Determine how best to tell your story, then develop it into a Q&A. This makes the message easier to remember and contributes to consistency. Distribute it to everyone: coaches, parents, athletes, participants and ask them to talk about what you are doing.

Post it on your website. But note: You will get tired of telling your story but the people hearing it will be always be interested because it will be new to them.

Two

INCLUDE YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR DIALOGUE

Invite your young/teen athletes and participants to contribute their stories and those of their friends. These may be the most illuminating and compelling examples of how sport/physical activity can help address social problems.

Ask them about bullying, self-image issues, for example, and how participating in their sport or physical activity has made a difference for them. Invite them to tell their stories. Talking in groups may make it easier.

Three

USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Use your Q&A to blog, tweet, Facebook post. Keep the messages short and change them often. **'Did you know'** is often an effective way to organise the information.

Four

OFFER TO SPEAK AT DINNERS AND OTHER EVENTS

Organisations are always looking for speakers and this is an effective way to talk about the benefits of sport and use your organisation's successes and failures to explain the **"what and how's"**.

It is an interesting topic - **"the social benefits of sport and physical activity"** - and one many people do not know much about or have not made the connection.

Five

PARTNER WITH CHARITIES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Many of these organisations have funding and are looking for someone to help them organise special or on-going events for their supporters or members.

Use these partnerships to expand your PR and communications efforts. Get your message in their blogs, on their websites and member conferences.

Tell your story. People will be interested.

Six

ORGANISE A MEDIA DAY

Invite local media to observe or participate in an event that shows what you are doing. Get your team members or participants to talk about how being a part of your organisation has helped them. Use your Q&A as the basis for this discussion to stay "**on message**".

Seven

SPEAK AT SCHOOLS

Volunteer to talk about sport/physical activity and the many benefits at local schools and parent meetings. Tell your story and encourage involvement. Help the students and parents to better understand what a positive role sport can play at all stages of life.

It can help students focus, improve concentration, and contribute to social interaction and development. Include your athletes and personalise your story with examples of how sport/physical activity has made a difference.

Eight

EDUCATE YOUR LOCAL POLITICIANS

Take advantage of political events, local MP surgeries, etc. to increase council/borough/regional support for sport on a macro level. By telling your story, it becomes more personal.

Play an active role in educating your local politicians about how sport and recreation contributes to helping mitigate many of the social problems they know they need to address.

Make sure they understand that a partnership with sport and recreation groups is a cost effective way for them to help address these issues. Keep them current on things like the closing of playing fields and community swimming pools and the spill-on effect decisions like that can have.

Nine

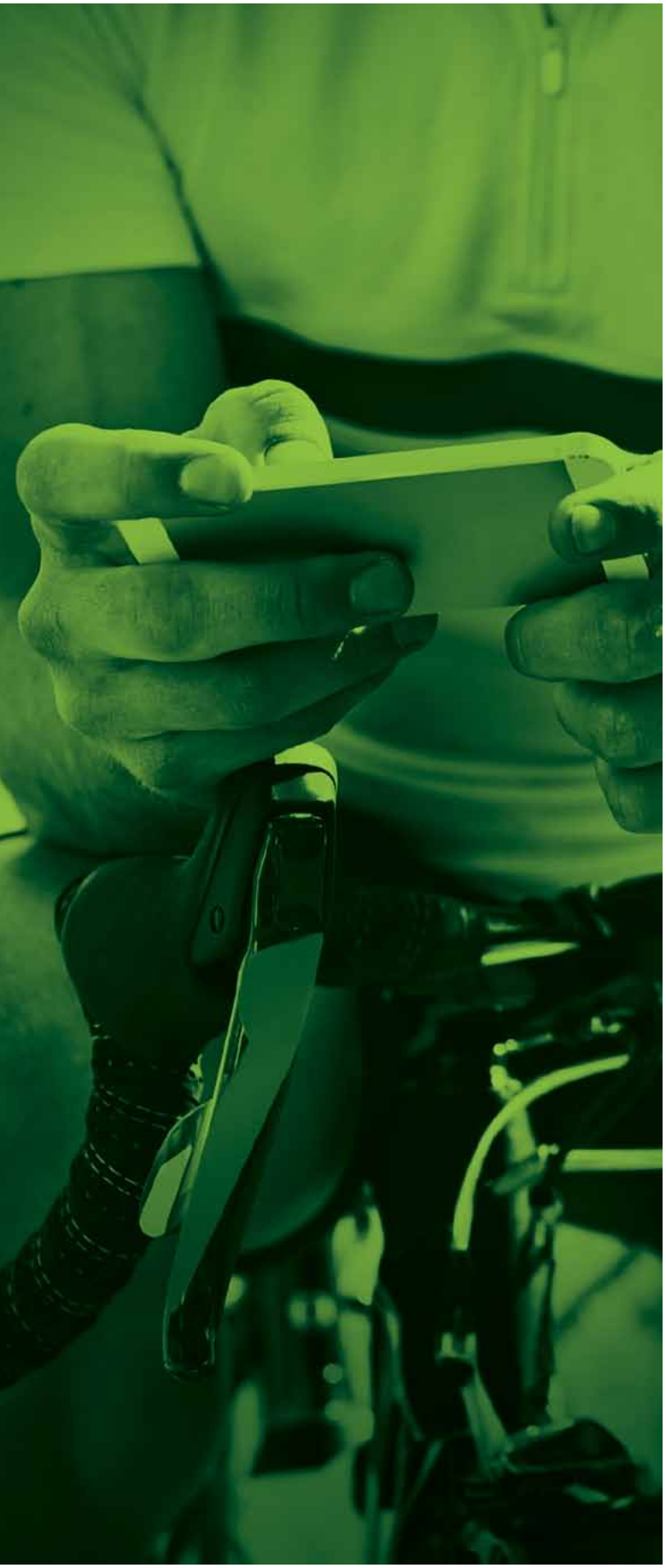
PARTNER WITH OTHER SPORTS AND RECREATION ORGANISATIONS

Critical mass can make a difference and working together can increase the efficacy of your efforts.

Ten

GET NON-TRADITIONAL SPORTS FACILITIES, LIKE LEISURE CENTRES, INVOLVED

Make them your partners in events, media days, etc. This can provide an additional resource.



Eleven

"BEYOND SPORT" AWARDS

Beyond Sport, the leading global force in convening sport for social change, sponsors events and awards to publicise what sport is doing to address issues of community concern and provide financial inclusion opportunities.

A global partnership of Barclays, UNICEF and Time Inc., this organisation promotes and rewards innovative programmes like the rugby teams started in inner-city Memphis in the US or football school programmes in Jamaica.

They use school dropouts as coaches (to keep them out of gangs) or football programmes to help refugee Muslim girls integrate into Irish society. Your programmes could win. Check out the website: **www.beyondsport.org**

Twelve

SIMPLE, OBVIOUS EFFORTS ARE OFTEN THE MOST EFFECTIVE

We have an important, interesting message, as a group and as individual organisations, and every communication or partnership that is developed helps.

Tell your story. People will be interested. Capture their imagination. And who knows where it might lead or the positive effect it might have?

7 THE TRUE SOCIAL VALUE CREATED BY VOLUNTEERS IN SPORT

"...it's that sense of community that I now thrive off and really helps me stay the course."
- Ben, felt that joining in with others is very motivating.

"...developed a huge network of friends and like-minded acquaintances who have really changed my life."
- Mags, sport is very much a social occasion to her.

"I don't believe I would have coped without it - it has been a positive distraction and provided an awesome support network for me and my kids."
- Mel, felt that sport was a life-saver following her experience with domestic abuse.

Rebecca Birkbeck

*Rebecca Birkbeck is CEO of **Join In**, the nation's charity for local sports volunteering.*

Every Saturday morning, rain or shine, people all over the UK race out of bed to take part in grassroots sport. The fact that getting active is good for self-esteem, personal development and building a social network isn't exactly news.

However Ben, Mags and Mel have one surprising thing in common: they are involved in community sport as volunteers. They are amongst the 3.2 million people across the UK who give their time to enable others to take part.[1]

Ben volunteers at Beverley Athletics Club, where his running journey began and where he continues to train. Mags by contrast had to stop running because of a knee injury, but says that through volunteering she is *"now more involved in the running community than when I was actually running."*

And Mel, who began volunteering by collecting the subs at her son's football club has gone on to set up Somerset North Youth Football League.

On top of all this Ben, Mags and Mel are also **Join In** Local Leaders, **'super volunteers'** who help local sports clubs in their area attract more helpers.

Volunteering has traditionally been understood as an activity that enables others - which is of course true. The Sport and Recreation Alliance's club survey shows that every 1 volunteer enables an average of 8.5 people to take part.[2]

[1] Sport England Active People Survey 2014
[2] Sport and Recreation Alliance Club Survey 2013

Most sport and physical activity in the UK simply couldn't happen without people contributing their free time. There are a whole host of roles that volunteers perform, from managing the club website to coaching a team. Some involve occasional helping out, others are a regular commitment.

But when you talk to sports volunteers, whatever their exact role, it becomes clear that most of them do it not only because it helps other people, but also because they gain from it themselves.

Join In was set up to capitalise on the wave of enthusiasm for sport and social action generated by the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, in which the Games Makers played an inspirational role.

We work to encourage more people to follow their example and volunteer in community sport. Our campaigns therefore need to address the question those not already volunteering will inevitably ask themselves **'why should I?'**

Understanding, measuring and describing what sports volunteers gain personally from their involvement is critical to answering this, and so since 2012 **Join In** has been working hard to share this. We have surveyed thousands of sports volunteers and interviewed hundreds.

What their stories tell us, and what the data reflects, is the wide array of motivations and the huge personal benefit that volunteers derive from their involvement in sport.

We also believe that communities benefit as a whole too. It is not only about what individuals and participants derive but also the wider growth in social capital that results from groups of people coming together to make local sport happen.

The fact that volunteering makes you happier isn't headline making in of itself - research had been undertaken elsewhere that demonstrated this, and it is reflected in the stories of **Join In** volunteers.

However, what **Join In** did uncover for the first time through its 2014 Hidden Diamonds research was how much happier sports volunteers are.

Using **New Philanthropy Capital's Emotional Wellbeing Framework**, we uncovered that:

People who volunteer in sport have...

10%
Higher
self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and resilience

15%
Less likey
to worry than those who have never volunteered

18%
More likey
to feel proud of themselves

28%
More likey
to feel what they do has importance[3]

[3] **Join In**, Hidden Diamonds: uncovering the true value of sports volunteers , p.12-13 www.joininuk.org/hidden-diamonds-true-value-of-sport-volunteers/

This increase in wellbeing has a clear value to individual volunteers that can be quantified economically. Economist Daniel Fujiwara, who worked with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Join In to evaluate this, costed the health and wellbeing benefits to each individual volunteer in sport at £2,974 per year.

So that's 3.2 million people in the UK who volunteer in sport every week investing almost £3,000 a year in their own wellbeing.[4] This intrinsic value has been recognised for the first time in the Government's new sports strategy Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, which describes volunteering as 'a specific form of engagement in sport that we want to encourage for its own sake rather than just as a means to an end (that is, enabling people to take part in sport or major events to take place).'[5]

Why is this important? Well, it means that volunteering is something that any organisation with an interest in health and wellbeing should be getting to grips with. **Join In**, other organisations in the volunteering and social action arena, and commercial organisations keen to promote a healthy workforce have helped to put it on the public health agenda.

Involvement in volunteering could be one way to support the social and emotional needs of people experiencing poor mental health, for instance. There's also an argument for taking the preventative angle and promoting it as a healthy lifestyle choice.

Whilst promoting volunteering because of its intrinsic benefits to the volunteer, there is of course the double benefit that if more people volunteer then they are creating more capacity for others to get physically active. The link between increasing volunteer numbers and increasing participation is one that needs further exploration, as the factors which influence participation are numerous and complex.

However, given the significant need to grow levels of physical activity, in Join In's view the role volunteers could play merits investigation. The question is are volunteers simply necessary to create capacity, or do they play a role in enabling inactive people to start taking part?

The evidence **Join In** has gathered would suggest that volunteers do already play a role in getting more people active - at least some of them. At the most basic level, they help clubs with waiting lists expand their provision and run more sessions. Dean Scopes runs Jubilee 77 Youth Football Club in Fareham, Hampshire. He describes the situation his club faced:

> *"In the summer of 2014, we wanted to grow our younger teams, but we didn't have enough coaches and couldn't ask our existing coaches to take on any more teams.*
>
> *Many of our volunteers were parents; but if we couldn't grow the membership, we couldn't find more parents to help. I saw an advert for **Join In** on TV, visited the website to create our club page; and by early 2015 we boasted three new teams – two under 7s and one under 8s – largely thanks to the volunteers found through **Join In**."*

Join In has also uncovered examples of local people setting up new clubs and groups to meet the needs of their local communities. Join In Local Leader Kirsty Cameron is one such individual. She joined a cycling club in Arbroath five years ago.

Although in theory it catered for all abilities, most of its members were speedy men. *"This discouraged women from joining the club"* she said. After the success of a ladies' ride at a cycling festival which she and her friend Rhona organised, the two women set up Ladies Leisurely Cycles - it started with a Facebook page and grew from there. In less than a year the club's membership grew to 87 members.

[4] Ibid

[5] HM Government, Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, December 2015, pp.37-38

Volunteers play a role in getting more people active.

Club founders often also play a role as activators, encouraging people who would be highly unlikely to turn up at a traditional sports club to get involved. Jane Ashbrook set up a running group after talking to mums in her playground and joggers in the park about why they didn't join the local athletics club.

Most people told her *"I would love to run but there's no way I can do it"* or *"running clubs are too intimidating and for people run who marathons and half marathons."* But Jane has persuaded them otherwise. Her group meets on Monday mornings - a time that suits a lot of parents with young children. 47 different people aged 26-65 have attended the sessions and 36 of them were complete beginners when they started.

Every volunteer in sport is doing something significant for their own wellbeing and that of other people, and volunteers like Kirsty and Jane are doing something extraordinary: bringing new people into sport and physical activity. There are doubtless many other ways of doing this.

However whatever else the sports strategy does to tackle the issue of inactivity, it can and should make use of the power of social action, of volunteers connecting with 'people like me' and setting up appealing, accessible alternatives to the opportunities already on offer.

The benefits of sports volunteering ripple out into the wider community, as Peter Gore at Bolton RUFC knows very well. As Deputy Junior Chairman of the club he's forged strong links with other local organisations based on mutual gain, for example partnerships with local schools and youth organisations.

Peter says that reaching out makes a major difference to some of his community's most vulnerable members: *"you see the kids with mental health issues struggling, they've come out of mainstream high school and are a bit vulnerable. Rugby gives them the confidence, it proves to them they can do things they didn't think they could."*

The relationships that Peter has built with other organisations through sports volunteering have helped to make his community a more cohesive and more resilient place. The benefits of this also come back to the volunteer: our Hidden Diamonds research demonstrates that sports volunteers have higher levels of trust and feel they have greater influence over their communities than non-volunteers.

Given the huge social value that sports volunteering brings, **Join In** believes sport should explicitly protect, recognise and nurture the unique and fundamental asset sport has in its volunteer base. As this is the case, we are excited about the opportunities offered by the new sports strategy, which has a strong focus on social impact and which recognises the intrinsic value of volunteering for the first time.

Also to be welcomed is the first ever published Sport England strategy on sports volunteering, expected later in 2016. There are examples of excellent practice around volunteer recruitment, retention and development, but standards vary widely from club to club, sport to sport and area to area and we hope that an overall strategy will help to change this.

By putting volunteers first and thinking about their motivations, their routes into volunteering, the quality of their experience and what will help keep them coming back week in week out, we can help them make the most meaningful contribution to their communities.

"Sport should explicitly protect, recognise and nurture the unique and fundamental asset sport has in its volunteer base."

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