

street games briefing paper



Report Subject: Multi-sport Provision

Title: Multi-sport: An effective means of engaging young people in sport in disadvantaged areas

Background

In the past, multi-sport provision has often been seen as a fun activity with little intrinsic value, usually run during the school holidays for younger children. However, this view has started to change and multi-sport is now recognised as an important element of doorstep sport programmes.

This summary paper provides an overview of multi-sport provision in doorstep sport projects, identifying learning points, good practice and the challenges that projects might face in delivering good quality multi-sport programmes for all young people. The findings are based on research conducted with a range of doorstep sport projects within the StreetGames network that have had different levels of experience of running multi-sport sessions.

The aim of multi-sport

Multi-sport sessions give young people lots of choice and experience of playing a wide range of sports. They are



the 'core activity' for developing young people's skills, confidence, knowledge and experience of playing sport in order to prepare them for taking up sports specific opportunities.

Multi-sport sessions

Multi-sport sessions offer young people the opportunity to play at least two if not three sports or more during



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the same session. Multi-sport sessions can be run in two different ways. The first approach is for young people to all play the same one sport together, then to all play a different sport together and so on until the end of the session. The second approach is to have more than one sport on offer at any time during the session so that young people can choose which sport(s) they want to play and when.

What a good doorstep multi-sport session looks like:

- Fun, a friendly atmosphere and easy for new young people to join
- Run by qualified coaches with the right style who get on well with young people.
- A different session every week with a wide range of sports including some old favourites and some new sports to try which are chosen by young people.
- Activities and sports adapted so that they bring together young people of different ages, different levels of skills, fitness, experience and knowledge about sport.

- Building in extra support to make it easier for girls and young women to join in or running a female only multi-sport session.
- Use of a facility in the community where young people feel safe and comfortable.
- Opportunities for young people to socialise with their friends and make new friends.
- Opportunities for young people to become volunteers and help run the session.
- Development of multi skills so that young people can get better at playing sport, enjoy it more and think about 'specialising' in one or more specific sports.
- Building in an easy transition from the multi-sport session to a sport specific opportunity.

Multi-sport sessions are growing in popularity

Some projects have started to run multi-sports sessions for the first time and some projects are expanding their existing multi-sport programmes. This 'resurgence' in multi-sport work is a direct result of feedback from both young people and coaches about the kind of sports sessions that they want.

The benefits of multi-sport sessions are being recognised

More projects are starting to recognise the multiple benefits of running multi-sport sessions. These benefits include offering more variety, introducing new sports, more fun and less boredom thereby attracting and retaining more participants, easier for coaches to integrate

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mixed age groups, mixed ability and fitness levels and male and female participants into the same session. Indeed, these benefits have been a factor for the decision by some projects to change from single sport sessions to multi-sport sessions and to take a more robust approach to the multi-sport work within their projects.

The need for projects to share their experience of running multi-sport sessions

In the past the majority of multi-sport sessions have been run as part of a summer holiday sports programme which is 'in theory' open to nine to eighteen year olds but 'in practice' often only attracts nine to fourteen year olds with a high ratio of boys to girls. These multi-sport sessions have often taken place on parks or open spaces during the summer and have had few links to other sports opportunities afterwards. However, as projects are now adopting a more sophisticated approach to multi-sport work, their good practice needs to be shared.

Key success factors for multi-sport sessions

A number of key success factors have been identified for running a good multi-sport session and although it is important for projects to consider all of them when they plan the sessions, it is clear that there are two critical factors. The most critical factor was the right coach(es) to run the session. There was clearly the need for a balance between having sports leadership and coaching qualifications and having the 'right style' and approach to



working with young people. The second most important factor identified by projects was the type of facilities used for the session. The choice of facilities often determined the choice of sports and the ability to include both female and male participants throughout the year. Although the ideal combination was to have both indoor and outdoor facilities available on the same site, this was often impossible for most projects and it was therefore dependant on the skill of the coaches running the session to adapt their activities and sports to make the facilities work for the young people.

Mixed or female only multi-sport sessions

The majority of projects running 'mixed' multi-sport sessions confirmed that the ratio of girls attending the sessions was low compared to boys (with the exception of one project). The findings of this report show that the choice of sports and facilities can be a major deterrent for female participation. It was clear that projects needed to consider a different approach to including girls and young



women in mixed multi-sport sessions or to offer female only multi-sports sessions.

The choice of sports within multi-sport sessions

Projects offered a wide range of sports within their multi-sport sessions but it was clear that there were a number of key sports played at the majority of sessions including football, cricket, rounders and dodgeball. Football was a key activity at many sessions and although it was clear that it was a popular sport that had the power to attract participants to the sessions, it did sometimes achieve the opposite result and 'deterred' some young people especially less able younger players and female participants from attending the sessions. Projects were keen to offer a wider selection of sports but it was clear that adapted versions of the sports such as 'kick rounders' and 'kick cricket' were often more successful as they were suitable for mixed age, ability and fitness groups and both male and female participants.

The development of skills at multi-sport sessions

All the projects recognised that the skill level of their young people varied and some of the participants at their sessions had a very low skill level. It was clear that the coaches needed to take a multi skill approach to their sessions to help young people to improve their playing ability which in turn would increase their enjoyment of playing sport which would then make them more likely to continue playing and give them the opportunity to make the transition to a specific sport opportunity if wanted.

The transition from multi-sport sessions to sport specific clubs and opportunities

The skill level of young people at a session is a key factor for the success of the transition from multi-sport to a sport specific opportunity. If a young person believes that their playing standard is not good enough then it is unlikely that they will choose to move on. Moreover, the wider vision for the doorstep sport club programme is to enable young people to move easily between different sport specific opportunities but this will only be achieved if young people have the basic skills needed to play a range of sports. The forms of transition currently used by projects to move from multi-sport to single sport specific opportunities were usually formal or informal football leagues or specialist dance sessions run by the project. Some projects used coaches and instructors who were already running sessions at their own local sports club or

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sports centre and some projects signposted some of their young people to established traditional sports specific clubs. However, most projects were keen to establish their own 'community style' sports clubs and to build a 'bridge' from the multi-sport session to a new style sport specific club.

Work with NGBs

In the majority of projects, the multi-sport sessions were delivered by the project's own sports coaches or volunteers with very little involvement from NGBs, most likely as a result of the low profile of the sporting significance of multi-sport work. However, some projects did have a close working relationship with a number of NGBs to support their involvement in local leagues and at the exit route stage through links to local NGB sports clubs. Moreover, two projects had developed a more structured 'hub' approach to supporting their local sports clubs through partnership working with their NGBs. This approach had helped to bridge the gap between multi-sport and sport specific clubs and had helped to increase

junior membership, develop more qualified coaches, better collaboration between local sports clubs especially when young people want to move between clubs and developed stronger links between local clubs and their NGBs.

Future work

StreetGames is keen to enhance and expand multi-sport work via the Doorstep Sports Club provision. To assist this, we will be looking to provide a range of training workshops which can support coaches, volunteers and leaders in this work in the near future, including a new Level 2 Principles and Preparation for Coaching Sport and Level 2 Award in Multi-Skill Development course.

For more detailed information on this research project – the full report can be downloaded via the link below.

<http://www.streetgames.org/www/sgplus/content/ensuring-multi-sport-heart-doorstep-sport-clubs>

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StreetGames

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

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

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

