

# spear

centre for sport, physical education  
& activity research



Engaging young people from deprived backgrounds in  
community sport sessions

Executive Summary



## About *spear*

The Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research (*spear*) is located within the Faculty of Social & Applied Sciences at Canterbury Christ Church University. *spear* undertakes a range of evidence-led analyses, from critical commentaries and reflections on current policy and practice, to commissioned research, evaluation and consultancy.

The Centre's research is funded by a range of national and international funders such as the International Olympic Committee, World Health Organisation, Terre des Hommes, Department of Health, Department for Education, Activity Alliance, Mencap, Access Sport, Youth Sport Trust, UK Sport, UK Coaching, Sport England and Sport Wales. Recent work has focused on sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing in schools and communities.

Research conducted by *spear* has helped guide and inform public policy by contributing to the wider evidence base used by policy makers, providing a rationale for government and commercial investment, and steering programme improvements that enhance the experience of practitioners and participants.

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The community sport sessions evaluation undertaken by *spear* and commissioned by Kent Sport. Report produced by *spear*.

December 2019

## Context

### About the community sport sessions

The community sessions this evaluation relates to are ‘Satellite Clubs’ funded by Sport England, Kent Sport and West Kent Housing. They are based in Gillingham and Sittingbourne and are taking place in school and community settings. They are delivered by a collaboration of supporting partners including Olympia Boxing CIC, Retraceuring Steps Parkour, Charlton Athletic Community Trust, Frindsbury Lawn Tennis Club and Medway Falcons Handball Club.

The programme aims to target inactive 14-19 year olds from low socioeconomic backgrounds within two of the most deprived areas in Kent. Key outcomes for the community sport sessions include improving the physical activity levels, mental health, wellbeing and social development of young people, changing perceptions of sport and physical activity, reducing antisocial behaviour and enhancing the local environment to create happier and healthier communities.

Activities comprise non-traditional sports, specifically chosen to attract the target audience. Activities are designed, structured and located to provide appealing and accessible opportunities for engagement. Each session embraces a ‘just turn up’ approach to welcome less active young people into a relaxed and friendly environment.

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### About *spear*’s evaluation

*spear* has been commissioned from May 2019 to November 2019 to conduct an independent evaluation of the community sport sessions. The evaluation captures insight around young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds to better understand the barriers and enablers of physical activity, capture evidence of outcomes achieved and draw out key lessons learnt.

This report focuses on the impact of the community sport sessions on participants, coaches, families and communities, and how this impact has been achieved. Data informing this report are drawn from 89 participant survey returns; telephone interviews with coaches; five site visits to community sport sessions and; site visit interviews and focus groups with participants, parents, coaches, community volunteers and police community support officers.

The report is divided into four substantive sections mapped to programme KPIs: *Activity & Attitudes; Mental Health, Wellbeing & Individual Development; Community Connectedness & Social Trust and; Antisocial Behaviour*. Table 1 summarises the evaluation approach for the community sport sessions.

#### Community sport session aims

##### *...for Activity Participants*

1. Increase physical activity levels
2. Enhance mental health and wellbeing
3. Support social development

##### *...for the Community*

4. Reduce antisocial behaviour of young people
5. Improve the local environment
6. Create happier and healthier communities

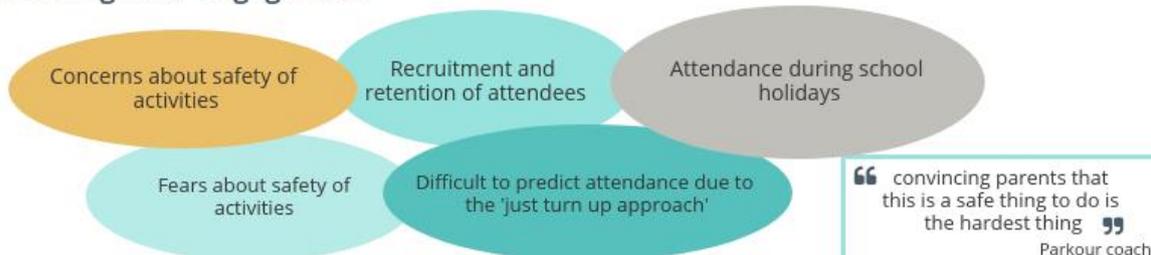
#### Research questions

1. Have the community sport sessions increased the activity engagement, mental health, wellbeing, individual and social development of less active 14-19 year olds from low socioeconomic backgrounds?
2. Have the community sport sessions raised awareness of sports potential to enhance community connectedness and social trust?
3. What have we learnt from the community sport sessions about engaging less active 14-19 year olds from low socioeconomic backgrounds in community activity opportunities?

# Insight

## Activity

### Challenges for engagement



## The Community Sport Sessions

### Inclusive approach

**Benefits:**

- Mixed ability group
- Wide age range of participants

**Reduces barriers such as:**

- Childcare
- Travel
- Finance



## Motivating factors for engagement

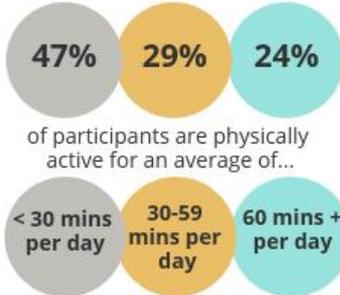


Data derived from the community sport sessions survey and site visit interviews with parents, coaches, youth workers and participants. To read the full report please visit [www.kentsport.org/satelliteclubs](http://www.kentsport.org/satelliteclubs).

# Impact

## Activity Levels

After 3 months of programme engagement...



“ I'm more active now ”

“ I do more exercise and am fitter than I used to be ”

**100%**  
of stakeholders and participants surveyed believe the programme has supported activity levels

“ The club has helped me get out more, all I used to do was sit indoors all day ”

“ A lot of young people sit indoors doing nothing so it's good to see other kids out and being active ”

## Attendance

Factors affecting attendance:

“ I can sit and talk to my friends but if I want to do some boxing I can join in when I want ”

**Just turn up nature**  
This meant that attendance was varied



**Activities offered**  
Some participants were unfamiliar with activities offered

“ maybe could have a trial session of a sport to entice people ”

“ It gives them something to do instead of sitting indoors or getting into trouble, it's something positive for them to do and gives them a focus ”

**Friends**  
Attendance increased when participants' friends joined

**Initial reluctance**  
Some reluctance to try new sports on offer

“ Instead of a coach being like a normal teacher, we get an opportunity to say what we want and he gives his input ”

**Friendship** was the **most influential** factor for **engaging** in a new club

“ when you first start it can be intimidating ”

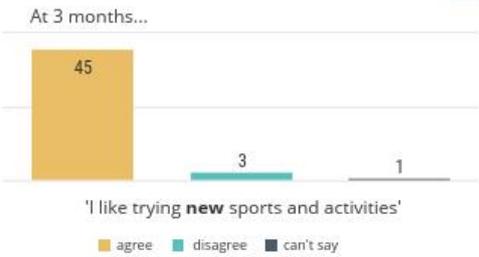
## Attitudes



**9 out of 10** participants



say they **enjoy** taking part in **exercise** and **sport** after three months of programme engagement



feel like a family, helps when I'm stressed, makes me happy, learn new things, fun, can be ourselves, I like pushing myself, I like the teamwork, keeps me active, somewhere to hang out, meeting people, everything, make new friends

Data derived from the community sport sessions survey and site visit interviews with participants, coaches, volunteers and police officers.

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# Mental Health, Wellbeing & Individual Development

After 3 months of engagement...



4/5 participants say they feel **confident** exercising and playing sports

“ I'm a lot stronger in my body and more **confident** in myself  
 I'm more **confident** when talking to people  
 I'm definitely more **confident** in my capabilities  
 I've improved in my **confidence** in loads of things  
 Before this I didn't really like talking to people, I got nervous, but now I seem **confident** when talking ”

100% of boxing participants reported **uplifted mood** post exercise

“ I started boxing to help with my anger ”

“ helps to unwind after a day at school ”

Participants report positive impact on mental health...



On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' participants rated the following after 3 months of engagement...

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?



Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you are doing in your life are worthwhile?



Overall how happy did you feel yesterday?



Participants were taught first aid and other basic life skills to complement the sport sessions at Saunders Street

**100% of participants interviewed thought this was enjoyable and beneficial**

Participants said...

“ we develop our skills  
 it makes me happy  
 it helps me when I'm stressed  
 we can be ourselves ”

I interact with other children  
 I like that I can push myself  
 I can learn new things

Data derived from the community sport sessions survey, site visits and stakeholder interviews with participants, coaches, volunteers and parents.

To read the full report please visit [www.kentsport.org/satelliteclubs](http://www.kentsport.org/satelliteclubs)

# Community Connectedness & Social Trust

After 3 months of programme engagement

7 in 10 participants say they 'like to listen to other people'



8 in 10 participants say they 'are good at getting their ideas across'



“ It gives you a new sort of community ”

Clubs have...



Provided a space to form local friendships



Encouraged young people to go outside and be active



Created a positive and non judgmental atmosphere where young people feel comfortable

Parents...

Some parents have supported sessions by volunteering or spectating



“ It's nice to see my kids out that would normally sit indoors all evening. It's a good way for them to make new friends ”

## Antisocial Behaviour

After 3 months of programme engagement

90%

of young people say they are 'willing to take on new challenges'

PCSOs are able to signpost **young people** to **opportunities** in the **local area**

“ There's been a **big improvement** since last year. Not so many **incident's** going on, **facilities** are **getting used** for their proper use rather than undesirables hanging around ”

“ The idea is that we are trying to give **diversionary projects** to **young people** to keep them away from **antisocial behaviour** and **gangs** ”

Participants from two community site visits described the clubs as feeling 'like a family'

“ We used to wander around with no goal, but with football we actually have a goal ”

“ I didn't know any of these people before. Now we're just a big group ”



Adult stakeholders and participants believe the programme has seen...



reductions in antisocial behaviour  
+  
decreased number of local incidents

Data derived from the community sport sessions survey, site visits and stakeholder interviews with participants, coaches, volunteers and police officers.

To read the full report please visit [www.kentsport.org/satelliteclubs](http://www.kentsport.org/satelliteclubs)

# Mini Case Studies

## Saunders Street Ball Cage

Located in Gillingham, one of the three most deprived areas in Medway and in the top 10% of deprivation nationally, Saunders Street Ball Cage sits in view of surrounding flats and hosts weekly evening sport sessions to young people. The boxing coach uses a relaxed, sociable and encouraging approach to delivery, offering pad work, punching techniques and skipping.

Alongside boxing, the ball cage is used to play football and basketball or used as a safe space for other recreational activities. Participants enjoy the freedom to move between the sports and use the opportunity to talk to their friends. This loosely structured approach to delivery has led to an inclusive atmosphere at the club. One less active young person explained they attended because it was a "good way to hang out with my mates and I can do a bit of boxing if I feel like it, but there's no pressure".

The success of this Satellite Club led to the creation of a final celebration event. This was well received by the community and attracted a varied audience. Local PCSOs, nearby residents, young people and parents came together to take part in circus skills, ball sports and boxing. Surrounding the Ball Cage were stands offering information on housing and job seeking, and face painting and free food was available to support and engage attendees.



“ We are trying to engage young people through sport. It's about giving them positive attitudes, giving them involvement, giving them options, letting them make choices. It's relaxed, it's unique, but it works ”  
(Lead Coach)



“ Satellite Clubs allows us to teach people who wouldn't normally be able to afford it. It gives them something to do because the problem is when there's nothing to do they'll find something to do and its usually something that will get them into trouble ”  
(Lead Coach)

## The Strand Parkour Park

The Strand is home to Medway's first parkour facility, which was eagerly anticipated by a number of young people who are fans of the sport. The new park sparked lots of interest and attendance is promising, with sessions on offer for all ages and abilities.

Participants at this club are proud to be involved in parkour and say it feels like a family, despite some being teased by their friends for joining the club. They explained how many young people are unaware of parkour, but once they see it in action they become interested. This was a challenge for engagement as participants said their friends won't join a club if they are unaware of the sport. The coach also noted some parents perceive parkour to be dangerous, further inhibiting engagement, but that this can be overcome with information and demonstrations.

An aspect of delivery seen as both effective and developmental was giving young participants the opportunity to choose their own challenges. Participants enjoyed overcoming these challenges and learning new skills independently, and as a team.

The coach explained how parkour is inclusive, enabling young people of varied ages and abilities to participate side-by-side. At the session, children as young as four took part in the activities, encouraged and supported by the older participants.

## Brompton Academy

Brompton Academy Secondary School is situated in a deprived area of Medway. The school's Satellite Club hosts weekly tennis to music Satellite Club sessions. These afterschool tennis sessions are well attended so participants were given the chance to take part in a competitive tournament against a local school. All participants interviewed spoke positively about this experience and were keen to take part in further tournaments in the future.

The coach believes the success of the tennis to music sessions is largely due to the innovative approach in teaching tennis. The sessions allow young people to experience the game in a relaxed, less structured way. Less active participants, who normally choose to spectate, now get involved and have a go. The music is credited for attracting participants and helps to create a positive atmosphere in the sports hall. Participants are given autonomy over song selection which is something they enjoy.



“ With the music in the background It takes away the serious atmosphere that is usually associated with tennis. Maybe gets them moving more subconsciously with the beat of music ”  
(Lead Coach)

Data derived from site visits stakeholder interviews with coaches, participants and volunteers.  
To read the full report please visit [www.kentsport.org/satelliteclubs](http://www.kentsport.org/satelliteclubs)

# Key Messages

## Engaging Young People from Underrepresented Groups in Community Sport

1

### Create meaningful relationships

Participants who feel like they have no one to talk to are most in need of relevant and accessible role models. Help these young people develop meaningful relationships through provision of coach, volunteer and peer role models that engage and inspire.



### Provide consistency

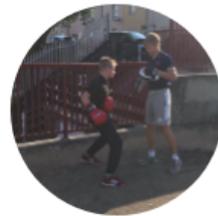
A sense of stability is fundamental to the ability to embrace opportunities. Provide a warm welcome and fun activities at the same time and place each week to create the foundation of trust and continuity often missing from targeted young people's lives and increase the likelihood of engagement.

2

3

### Offer accessible, developmental activities

Young people benefit from a range of experiences, including those that model healthy behaviours and attitudes, facilitate relationships and develop life skills. Help support holistic development by providing relevant, appealing and accessible activities.



### Create a safe space

Non-competitive activities may initially be required to develop the confidence and competencies young people need to embrace sports. Start with non-competitive activities before introducing 'elements of competition' to provide stepping stones to more challenging sporting opportunities.

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### Use social media

Stakeholders advocate better, and more extensive use of social media to promote and monitor engagement with Satellite Clubs. Use social media to increase visibility, familiarity with the clubs' ethos and structure, and awareness of activity opportunities available.



### Encourage autonomy

The chance to choose music in tennis-to-music Satellite Club sessions was key to the appeal of these sessions. Encourage provision to be informed, driven and delivered by young people for young people to motivate engagement and maximise impact.

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