

Renewal th

A collaboration of several leading bodies has produced Delivering Sport and Physical Activity in Renewal Areas – A toolkit for Practitioners and Strategic Managers. The draft report, reproduced over the following pages, was co-produced and funded by: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Sport England, Active Community Unit, The FA, DCMS, Street Games, Football Foundation, British Sports Trust, London 2012 and the NHS

Increasing participation in sport and physical activity in renewal areas can contribute to floor targets in renewal areas and help to close the gap between the worst areas and the rest in relation to crime, education, health, housing and the environment, and jobs. But evidence suggests that, because participation in sports and physical activity in renewal areas is lower than the national average, the contribution of sport to these floor targets is not as great as it could be.

There are many reasons for this lower participation. Neighbourhood renewal areas have been poorly served by traditional indoor sports centres and swimming pools. There are relatively few small-scale sports facilities – outdoor pitches, play and kickabout areas – and they are often in poor repair. There are fewer sports clubs and fewer volunteers. While there appear to be a good number of sports projects, these are often one-off and short-term. Individual attitudes to sport and lack of time also contribute to lower participation.

Planning and implementing sports and physical activity projects, with the aim of increasing participation in neighbourhood renewal areas, involves: undertaking and assessment of sporting and physical activities; developing long-lasting partnerships; developing a local infrastructure of volunteers, clubs and networks; accessing increased and longer-term funding; and demonstrating the success of sports projects through good organisation, planning, marketing, monitoring and review. Neighbourhood renewal areas have been poorly served by traditional sports facilities while local facilities are below standard.

What's the problem?

Participation in sport and physical activities gives a wide range of social and health benefits, both for

individuals and for communities. But most sports facilities and projects so far have been unsuccessful at addressing the inequalities in sports participation by people on low incomes, which is less than half the national average, and some ethnic minorities also participate less than the average. This means that people in neighbourhood renewal areas are missing out on the benefits of sport.

Why is this? One reason is that there is often a lack of a basic sports infrastructure in these neighbourhoods. While there are some public sports centres in neighbourhood renewal areas, many do not attract much participation from residents. Many small-scale facilities – play and kickabout areas – are old, poorly maintained and suffer from safety problems.

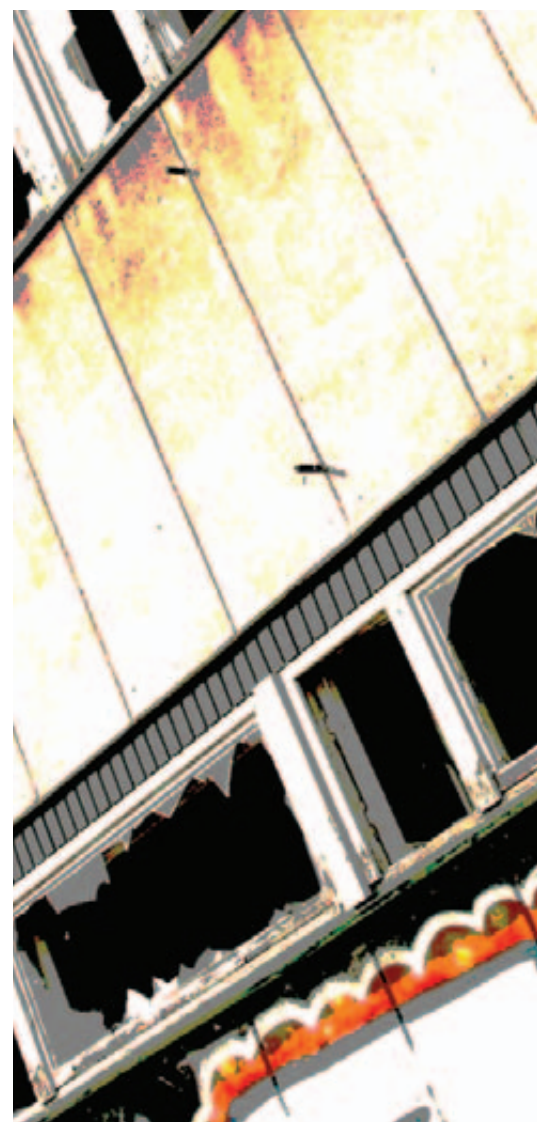
Partly because of the lack of facilities, it appears that relatively few sports clubs are based in renewal areas, while the increasing number of private health and fitness clubs do not cater for most residents of renewal areas.

Though there are a number of outreach sports projects in renewal areas, many of these are funded on a short-term basis, limiting their effectiveness.

All in all, neighbourhood renewal areas suffer from a lack of the basic sports infrastructure – both the physical infrastructure of buildings and facilities, and the 'people' infrastructure of clubs, volunteers, helpers and networks – which make sport and participation in sport possible.

In addition to this lack of infrastructure, there are attitudinal barriers that prevent people from participating in sport or from being active. Many individuals believe that 'sport is not for the likes of us'. Many individuals claim that they have no time for sports – though sometimes this means that sport is not a priority for them.

Others may have negative perceptions about the



safety and quality of local sports facilities, or may be unaware of the sports opportunities that are available.

If sports participation is to be increased in neighbourhood renewal areas, these attitudinal barriers must be addressed at the same time as the physical and social sporting infrastructure is put in place. This is most important for those groups who suffer most adversely from a lack of sports or physical activity, and who could most benefit from participating. These include young people, older people, ethnic minorities and those suffering from, or in danger of developing, a range of health conditions (including obesity, coronary heart disease and osteoporosis).

rough sport



The sports sector had not prioritised participation by residents of renewal areas, while regeneration and partners agencies have not prioritised sport in renewal areas.

What are the causes?

The reasons for the lack of a sporting infrastructure in renewal areas are complex. These include:

- Local authority sports departments not prioritising participation by residents of renewal areas;
- Previous attempts at developing sport in renewal areas have not been successful;
- Local authority housing departments, regeneration agencies, social housing agencies and other partners responsible for regeneration not prioritising sport projects and programmes in renewal areas;
- Sports clubs being focused on developing their sport rather than seeing it as their job to provide a 'social service';
- Private sector fitness operators viewing sport and fitness in purely market terms – and, therefore, seeing renewal areas as peripheral to their business;
- Until recently, the health and social benefits of sport being insufficiently advocated or recognised; and
- Little hard evidence from individual sports projects about their impact.

'There are relatively few small-scale sports facilities – outdoor pitches, play and kickabout areas – and they are often in poor repair'

In terms of mainstream, local authority sports provision, many sports centres are outside renewal areas and therefore are by definition more difficult to access, requiring additional transport costs and a greater time commitment. But even most of those local authority sports centres which are geographically accessible have not attracted much participation from residents.

This is because, when they were set up (in the 1970s and 1980s) sports centres did not specifically

target those groups who participated least as central to their business. Instead, in the main, they took the easier task of attracting more participation from people from those groups who were already taking part in sport.

Since these mostly came from the higher social classes, they tended not to be people from neighbourhood renewal areas.

The bias in sports participation was reinforced by the advent of Compulsory Competitive

initiatives into sports centres using sports centres' budgets.

There have been a number of attempts by mainstream sports providers to develop sport in renewal areas, but many have not been successful, often for a variety of implementation reasons. Some have been initially successful but, without mainstream funding, have not been sustainable.

While the sports and leisure departments of local authorities were not prioritising sports participation by residents from renewal areas, the housing departments of local authorities, regeneration agencies and other partners involved in developing renewal areas were not prioritising sport in their regeneration planning. Some existing small-scale sports facilities were taken over for other uses, and many of the remainder fell into increasing disrepair. A number of outreach sports and sport development projects were funded in renewal areas, but the short term, 'one off' funding and nature of these projects (contrasting with the long term mainstream funding of local authority sports centres) underlined the lack of commitment by the agencies concerned.

This lack of commitment is partly explained by the fact that it is not a statutory duty of local authorities to provide sport, partly because mainstream sports providers have taken a narrow view of what constitutes sport, and partly because – in the past – the health and social benefits of sport were not persuasively advocated. Indeed, it is only in the past 10 years or so that the sports sector, led by Sport England, has recognised that the need to advocate these benefits, and to gather the evidence to back up its case, is part of the day job. Similarly, it is only in these last 10 years that professionals in other sectors have begun to recognise the benefits that sport can bring in neighbourhood renewal.

If participation in sport and physical activity is to be increasing in neighbourhood renewal areas, the attitudinal barriers that prevent people from participating in sport and physical activity must also be addressed. Partly this is about ensuring that people understand the health benefits of sport, and persuading them to make sport a regular part of their lives. Partly, it is about starting with the needs of local people rather than from sports products driven approach, which has characterised much of local authority sports to date. Partly it is about understanding the complexity of physical and psychological barriers to taking part in sport.

There are a number of principles which help to increase the success of sports projects. These include: focusing on local needs; developing a local sports infrastructure of volunteers, networks and partners; demonstrating success through good planning, organisation and monitoring, and accessing long-term funding.

What has been tried?

There are a number of principles that underpin sports projects, which have been successful in increasing sports participation in renewal areas. This section gives an overview of these principles. Other documents on www.renewal.net examine each of the principles in a more practical and detailed way.



'There have been a number of attempts by mainstream sports providers to develop sport in renewal areas but many have not been successful'

Tendering (CCT) in the early 1990s. This led local authority sports departments to adopt a more 'business-like' approach – one that focused on increasing income rather than increasing access or sport for all. This reinforced the trend towards marketing sports programmes to existing customers (because this was less risky) and to those who would pay full price rather than those, like young people, senior citizens or those on benefits, who could not.

CCT also meant that, in most local authorities, sports centre management was split from sports development teams. Many of these had been set up to increase participation in sports ('Sports for All'), but they were usually under-staffed, had too wide a brief, and found it difficult to 'mainstream' their

Focusing on local needs

The first step is to focus on local needs. In the past, sports deliverers have often taken a 'top-down' approach to providing sports activities, where what is provided is what the sports deliverers believe is what residents want. Often this is 'product-drive' – in other words, what is provided is determined by the sports 'products' that the sports deliverer is able to offer. This is usually for a captive market, e.g. regular participants of particular sports.

The opposite approach, although it is more difficult and takes longer to get off the ground, appears to work better in the long term. This involves spending greater effort and time finding out exactly what local people want and need. This involves:

- Redefining 'sport' as 'sport and physical activity' and including activities such as dance (barn, line, street, flamenco...), walking and even gardening;
- Recognising that people may perceive their needs as 'social' rather than 'sporting' or that the sports need is only part of a wider package;
- Finding out what particular groups of local people need; and
- Uncovering what are the specific barriers to participation for specific groups.

Developing a local infrastructure

Developing and organising sport projects and activities is complicated. To be successful and sustainable it relies on developing a local sports infrastructure – both the physical infrastructure of sports facilities, equipment and transport and the 'people' infrastructure of volunteers, helpers, coaches, clubs, networks and partnerships that one can turn to for specific advice, help and information.

Without volunteers, few sports clubs would survive and they are also invaluable to schools, colleges, youth clubs, faith groups and other community organisations that help organise sports. While one-off projects can help to recruit some volunteers, these volunteers can be lost if there are not further opportunities for them to remain involved. Developing and building partnerships with other renewal and local agencies, and connecting schools, clubs and sports facilities are two other elements in developing a local sporting infrastructure.

Building the 'people' infrastructure in renewal areas will also help to identify the needs for the physical sports infrastructure, and will give added weight for funding for these initiatives. This physical infrastructure will include not only sports facilities (including small-scale, informal facilities based on local schools) but also equipment stores, mini-buses (for free, easy transport to specialist sports centres), etc.

Organising sports projects

The complexity of organising and delivering sports projects should not be underestimated. Based on the Needs Assessment, a Sports Development Plan should be written. Potential partners should be identified and engaged. The projects should be promoted and marked, and funding found. All this

requires careful planning and organisation to fixed deadlines.

Monitoring and evaluation

To show that projects have been successful requires establishing their aims, objectives and targets beforehand and building in means of monitoring and evaluation. Many projects have been criticised in the past for having too many or too vague aims: be specific about what you want to achieve and be realistic about how you can achieve. Build in monitoring and review from the start of the project.

Demonstrating the success of projects

Monitoring and evaluation will help to establish whether the project has been successful or not. Where the project has been successful, the final step is to demonstrate and raise awareness of the success of the project to other sports professionals, other partners and funding agencies. This should include details of what were they key factors in the success of the project so that it can be used as a basis for successful projects elsewhere. Too often in the past projects have been successful, but their success has not been disseminated – leaving the wheel to be reinvented elsewhere.

Accessing long-term funding

While there are a number of sports projects in renewal areas that attract short-term funding, there are fewer which attract longer-term funding (three to five years) and very few projects and facilities that are funded through mainstream funding. The great majority of local authority funding for sports is tied to mainstream sports facilities. Many sport development officers and teams are funded on a permanent basis but often they are seen as providing a borough-wide service. This limits their impact in any individual local area.

While the cost of sport can be reduced through good planning and management and the use of volunteers, most sports activities and programmes do require funding. This is particularly true where cost is a barrier to participation, and for those programmes that involve qualified coaches and instructors. Long-term, mainstream funding is usually the only way to ensure sustainability of projects.

Checklist

Start by researching your neighbourhood and assessing the need for sport and physical activity. Who currently takes part in sport and physical activity regularly? Where do they participate and when? Are there other, similar sports facilities they could use? Why don't they use them? Who doesn't currently participate in sport? What reasons do they give for this? What are the barriers preventing them taking part in sport?

Use outreach techniques and talk to local people and groups, as well as using more traditional market research techniques. Go out and talk to individuals from hard-to-reach groups on their own territory.

Which local organisations and individuals may be interested in helping to develop sport and physical activities in the area? What part could they play?

What are the best ways to contact those organisations and individuals?

Call on the help of the Sports Action Zone staff (if your area is in a SAZ area) or local authority sports development officers. They may already have done a needs assessment and audit of facilities.

Develop and build partnerships with renewal agencies, local community organisations and sports deliverers.

Find out where there are existing links between schools, clubs and sports facilities and build and develop these.

Develop a Sports Development Plan. This will set out your aims for your project(s). Is it mainly about increasing participation? Is it for groups that traditionally do not take part in sport? Or is it also about achieving other benefits – e.g. health, community safety, social skills and so on? Set yourself specific targets. Your plan should set out a number of specific actions – projects and activities that are going to be completed within certain timescales, involving specific deliverers and partners, with targets for the number of participants, etc.

Don't underestimate the complexity of planning and organising sports projects. Once a sports activity or tournament is publicised, slippage cannot happen!

How are these aims, objectives and targets going to be monitored and evaluated? Build in monitoring systems from the planning stage of the project. Think too about how, having established that a project was successful, you can demonstrate and publicise this to tour partners, other sports providers and funders. What were they key factors that made it a success? How easily can the learning of this project be transferred to similar projects elsewhere?

Start compiling a list of potential funding organisations with contact names and details. Talk to these contacts about the projects you are interested in promoting. Get their advice on whether this would be a priority for them and the best way to pitch a bid. Make contact with local authority officers and members. ●

This draft report has been used with the kind permission of Jane Ashworth, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Want to know more?

Contact Sport England – Tel: 02072 731500

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