

Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper Consultation – Submission by the Sport and Recreation Alliance

The Sport and Recreation Alliance

The Sport and Recreation Alliance believes that the power of sport and recreation can change lives and bring communities together. We represent more than 330 organisations from across the sport and recreation sector and provide advice, support and guidance to our members who include traditional governing bodies of sport, county sports partnerships, outdoor recreation, water pursuits, exercise, movement and dance, and sport for development organisations. As the voice of the sector, we work with Government, policy makers and the media to make sure grassroots sport and recreation grows and thrives. Having an active nation is important as it delivers huge benefits to society and the millions of participants, volunteers, staff and spectators

General Comments

The Alliance warmly welcomes Government's consultation on the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper. We have advocated for policy changes which maximise the economic and social impact of sport and recreation for some time, and wish to highlight the following salient points which provide useful background when considering the social impact of sport and recreation in the improvement of integration within communities. Before responding to the consultation's questions, we encourage Government to note:

1. Sport has an incredibly positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the population in addition to its key role in bringing communities together. We welcome *the Integrated Communities Strategy's* focus on outcomes which we feel are largely in line with the benefits that sport and recreation delivers. However, Government must be clear about how performance will be assessed and how they will support better impact measurement.
2. The sport and recreation sector delivers significant social impact which has traditionally not been recognised and embedded across wider Government policy. Whilst there is a broad recognition of the benefits delivered by London 2012 and other major sporting events in bringing together people from all backgrounds, it is important to highlight and recognise the very significant contributions made by grass roots clubs to supporting greater social integration on a daily basis. If society is to experience the real value of sport and recreation, Government must take note of the impact of both major events and grass roots sport clubs on social integration when considering policy developments.
3. Further to this, volunteering in sport makes very real contributions to enhanced social cohesion, creating meaningful opportunities for greater social integration. The Alliance's work around volunteering in sport – in particular, our [Hidden Diamonds](#) report evidencing the hidden value of volunteers in sport and recreation – suggests that sports volunteers act as a catalyst for increasing integration and tackling segregation within local communities. If Government is truly deliver a meaningful, integrated communities strategy, we hope it will recognise and promote the role of sports volunteers and the positive impact they play on bringing people from all backgrounds together.

4. Following Government's recent Civil Society Strategy consultation, it is important to recognise that sport and recreation is a part of civil society and that strengthening this will help address wider challenges around social integration. Government must ensure that the development and implementation of future strategy is joined up in its thinking, with cross-departmental working prioritised.

Comments in Response to Specific Questions

Q2. We believe that the varied nature and scale of integration challenges means that tailored local plans and interventions are needed to tackle the issues specific to particular places. Do you agree?

Yes -The Sport and Recreation Alliance recognises that individual communities will have their own challenges and particular objectives as a result, with tailored local plans and interventions wholly necessary to tackle the issues of integration.

That being said, we believe there must be a coordinated approach to communications and fair resource allocation to different localities, to ensure the counteraction of inequalities. As such, we encourage Government to take the findings from the Race Disparity Audit into serious consideration, and to integrate appropriate changes into the *Integrated Communities Strategy*.

Government must have a cross-departmental vision for establishing unified communities, with synchronised execution and empowerment and resourcing of local authorities to deliver this across the country. We believe that if local sport programmes are implemented as a mechanism for integration, Government will be able to address a host of integration challenges including lack of social mixing and the promotion of values including mutual respect and the rule of law.

We firmly believe that community hubs – in particular, leisure centres, community centres and public sport facilities – are vital to local communities' development and the enrichment of healthier lives for the population. Prioritising the sustainability of local parks and green spaces is also integral to maintaining inviting, shared spaces that all community members want to socialise and integrate within.

Q3. Do you have any examples of successful approaches to encourage integration that you wish to highlight, particularly approaches which have been subject to evaluation?

Yes - We have the following examples of successful approaches that have encouraged social integration based on our members' work and our own research, that we wish to highlight:

- School of Hard Knocks
[School of Hard Knocks](#) (SOHK) is a social inclusion charity which uses sport (primarily rugby) to tackle issues surrounding unemployment, crime and health and teach children the values of social bonds, self-control and self-efficacy. SOHK offers numerous sport programmes to a range of participants – including to those not in education, training and employment (NEETs), with extremely promising results: within just two terms of the implementation of SOHK there was a 71% reduction in referrals for behaviour among the most disengaged year 9 pupils. Other participants reported the following effects; “For me it has gone a long way in terms of building new friendships...”¹. “SOHK helped me get back control of my life and gave me something to belong to...”². See the Alliance's

¹ P.11 <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/0f6b1aac-a3c8-436c-98f0-973f97c128d8.pdf>

² Ibid.

2016 report 'Uncovering the Social Value of Sport' for more information:

<http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/0f6b1aac-a3c8-436c-98f0-973f97c128d8.pdf>

- Kickz
[Kickz](#) is a programme which uses professional football clubs to engage 12-18 year olds in deprived areas who are at greater risk of crime and anti-social behaviour. Kicks aims to engage young people in constructive activities which link to Government's Every Child Matters framework, break down barriers between the police and young people, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, encourage volunteering within throughout the target neighbourhoods and create routes into education, training and employment. Where the programme has been running, youth crime fell from 2,529 incidents to 867 in three years, a significant decrease of 66% ³.
- Active Communities
 Organised by the London Sports Trust, [Active Communities](#) encourages inter-generational cohesion through sport and physical activity on housing estates in West London. The programme helps inactive Londoners becomes more involved in exercise through fun and innovative projects, with programmes delivered to families, adults and people with mental health problems.
- Doorstep Sport Clubs
 Street Games' [Doorstep Sport Club](#) programme provides support to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in sport. Doorstep Sport Club has delivered £20 million in investment and engaged over 100,000 young people in sport. Street Games also offer guidance and advice to coaches and project leaders on the challenges of providing sport in a doorstep environment and retaining participants on a long-term basis.
- Greenhouse Sports
[Greenhouse Sports](#) is a London-based charity that uses sport to engage with young people and improve their life chances. They partner with schools and embed coaches into the school environment on a full-time basis to deliver high quality, intensive programmes that engage, empower and inspire young people growing up in disadvantaged communities.
- Game of Life Report
 The Alliance's [Game of Life](#) report discloses that 1 in 3 people say they have only 1 or 2 close friends, however that 4 in 5 say that they make friends through exercising and sport. The Alliance asks that Government take note of this strong, positive correlation between participation in exercise and social contribution. After employment and education, sharing hobbies and going to sports clubs were the most frequent public response (29%) for how people from diverse backgrounds could be encouraged to mix more⁴. This is further supported by Long, Sanderson et al (2001) who report the most commonly noted beliefs for leisure time physical activity are; enhanced confidence, empowering disadvantaged groups and improving capacity of community to take initiatives.

Q4. The Green Paper proposes that we need to build the capacity of our leaders to promote and achieve integration outcomes. Do you agree?

We agree that leaders must be appropriately trained to enable optimal achievement of integration outcomes, which will in turn inspire others and help facilitate a more inclusive society as a result.

³ P.7 <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/dc94c3da-feaa-4f33-849e-bfc7c0c4b889.pdf>

⁴ P.134 <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/2d77274e-af6d-4420-bdfb-da83c3e64772.pdf>

We believe that it should be the responsibility of our volunteers and leaders to publish measurable outcomes to achieve greater diversity and equality within their respective communities, however in order to achieve such ambitions, sports clubs require guidance and support to attract local leaders – a challenge evidenced through our research around the barriers sports clubs face in recruiting, rewarding and retaining local volunteers.

Government should share best practice with local communities and utilise case studies to help explain the benefits of volunteering and the positive contribution it brings to society.

Q5. The Green Paper proposes measures to support recent migrants so that they have the information they need to integrate into society and understand British values and their rights and responsibilities. Do you agree with this approach?

The Alliance believes it is absolutely necessary for migrants to receive the information required to effectively integrate into society. We further believe that, in addition to the provision of information regarding healthcare, housing and education services, migrant families ought also to be given information regarding opportunities within the local community to support a holistic integration into local society.

We draw Government's attention to the value of participation in and spectatorship of sport in assisting a family to integrate through the Bude Refugee Support Group, as outlined in Chapter 2 of the *Green Paper*.

Additionally we would like to showcase a case study demonstrating the key role which refugees play in a local table tennis club in Brighton: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/videos/2018/4/5ae316154/the-uk-table-tennis-club-helping-refugees-integrate.html>

Q7. The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that all children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain and have the opportunity for meaningful social mixing with those from different backgrounds. Do you agree with this approach?

Yes - The Alliance supports Government's aim to ensure that children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain through facilitated social mixing with those from different backgrounds.

Though we acknowledge that Dixons Mixed Multi-Academy Trust's work can support this, as detailed in Chapter 3 of the *Green Paper*, we encourage Government to consider the deployment of additional, organised, regular school sport fixtures and competitions to help drive wider social integration.

Such opportunities will help foster comradery through an opportune team environment, but will also enable children and young people to develop well established routines, and a range of soft skills including team working and effective communication, which will then support the facilitation of a more cohesive community within individual school environments.

The Alliance firmly believes that the development of these life skills in young people should be a priority for Government if a core purpose is to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

This holds particularly true for young people within further or higher education. In 2013, research by British Universities and Colleges Sport found that more than nine in 10 (94 per cent) of the employers questioned, identified a clear link between participation in university sport and the development of valuable skills and strengths for business application in potential employees. The same research found that graduates who participate in sport at university, subsequently earn 18% more per year on average. More information on this research and the impact which participation in sport can have on young peoples' future employability can be found here: www.bucs.org.uk/valueofsport.

Q10. The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that people, particularly those living in residentially segregated communities, have opportunities to come together with people from different backgrounds and play a part in civic life. Do you agree with this approach?

The Alliance wholly supports the position stated in the *Green Paper* that ‘access to high quality public space can help create physical environments in which people from different backgrounds feel comfortable coming into contact and mixing with each other’. We strongly believe that high-quality public spaces act as a long-term catalyst for the creation of more active, dynamic communities, and agree that that ‘shared spaces and shared activities help to create a sense of place and foster local residents’ pride’.

We would draw Government’s attention to findings from the Heritage Lottery Fund’s State of UK Public Parks 2014 research which found that the ‘healthiest cities’ with the highest level of activity and lower levels of obesity, had a far higher proportion of green space. The key conclusion here was that ‘the most healthy areas have 20% more green space than ‘the least healthy areas’⁵.

Further to this, we remind Government that increasing and expanding these high-quality public spaces, local communities will have greater opportunities to be active outdoors supporting ‘lower levels of stress, depression and with increased self esteem and energy levels’⁶. In the disparity of access to green space, there is an inequality in the allocation of public goods: something that must be addressed if Government is to deliver a more equal quality of life for all communities.

The Alliance is pleased to see value placed on parks and open spaces as ‘valuable shared community spaces’ as it is proven that outdoor recreation can alleviate social isolation and promote integration⁷. We welcome Government’s cooperation with local parks groups and volunteers through the Parks Action Group to identify how parks can be protected and enhanced to enable social mixing and optimal health outcomes.

The Alliance fully supports Government with their intention to back sport-based interventions to build integrated communities, and plans to ‘work with Sport England... to use sport and physical activity to bring people together’.

The Alliance would like to again highlight and commend the positive impact the Kickz programme has had on communities. In an area of north London where the programme has been running, youth crime fell from 2,529 incidents to 867 in three years, a significant decrease of 66%⁸.

We would also like to draw Government’s attention to the Greater London Authority’s London Together Fund⁹ which is using sport as a tool for social change, bringing together people from different backgrounds to strengthen community cohesion. Though a new project, the Fund demonstrates real intent and may provide a scalable model for replication by other local authorities.

Beyond this, the Alliance asks Government to take note of the UN’s Sport Development for Peace International Working Group policy document ‘Harnessing the Power of Sport’. The document advises that “sport is included in government strategies as a way of addressing the challenges faced by excluded populations and to prevent conflict arising as a result of these”. The report concludes that sport “can help marginalised people to acquire the skills they and self-confidence needed to both overcome personal barriers and advocate for the elimination of structural barriers to their full participation in community life”¹⁰.

⁵ <https://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2014>

⁶ P.19 Reconomics

⁷ Ibid

⁸ P.7 <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/dc94c3da-feaa-4f33-849e-bfc7c0c4b889.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/sports/london-together-using-sport-increase-social-integration>

¹⁰P.213 http://toolkit.ineesite.org/resources/ineecms/uploads/1088/harnessing_the_power_of_sport_EN.pdf

We note that the direct relationship identified by the UN's policy document between sport and community cohesion mirrors the ultimate objective of the *Green Paper's* definition of an integrated community which are communities in which people "live, work, learn and socialise together".

Sport and Recreation Alliance
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