

UNDERSTANDING THE MOTIVATIONS & NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN WALES

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PHASE 2 – DEVELOPING PEER RESEARCHERS

Prepared by StreetGames for Sport Wales
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SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In February 2022 StreetGames was commissioned by Sport Wales to undertake a two-phase research project, to help deepen understanding in relation to young people's behaviours, views and motivations to sport in the Post Pandemic world.

The project looked to specifically draw answers to the following questions:

- Whether the sporting offer has changed?
- Whether there is a need to move to a health and wellbeing/non-traditional offer?
- What do young people want and how we gain that insight?
- Why are young people not engaging in the current offer provided to them?

Phase One of the project comprised desk-based research, which focused on reviewing a number of key insight reports published between 2019-22 that were identified in partnership with Sport Wales (i.e. this was a small-scale, focused desk review rather than an exhaustive academic literature review). Phase One of the project was completed in April 2022 - the findings from this desk review can be found [here](#).

Phase Two of this study, was undertaken between July – September 2022 and involved developing and supporting three groups of young people to act as Peer Researchers who explored with their peers the key findings from the Phase One desk review; to understand if these findings were reflective of the opinions of young people living in three different communities within Gwent. (See methodology section below for more information).

This report provides a summary of the key findings from the Phase Two Peer Research element. It discusses the key findings in relation to the questions posed above and explains the methodology and context the research was conducted within. This report also includes a summary of the learning gained through this project and the Peer Researchers' aspirations for future research in this space.

METHODOLOGY

To undertake Phase Two, StreetGames partnered with three local organisations from the network, comprising: one school-based group, one sports club-based group and one community-based group.

A bespoke Peer Researcher training session was delivered by StreetGames to all three cohorts, to help prepare the young people to act as Peer Researchers in their communities. This involved an interactive workshop, focusing on the context of the research, the skills required for the role, research methods, safeguarding considerations and wellbeing.

StreetGames continued to provide additional support to each of the groups throughout the project, to ensure that the research was conducted in a timely manner and remained within the scope of the research questions; providing specific support to help them to 'plan, do and revise' the questions posed by the Peer Researchers and gain the insight required and to analyse the findings.

As with Phase One, the questions this research set out to answer are:

- Has the sporting offer changed?
- Do we need to move to a health and wellbeing/non-traditional offer?
- What do young people want and how do we gain that insight?
- Why are young people not engaging in the current offer provided to them?

However, in this phase, the key findings from the desk research were shared with the Peer Researchers, to help facilitate discussions and provide a base for them to develop their own research questions with their peers.

This in turn, enabled the Peer Researchers to explore whether the findings from Phase One were reflective of other young people in Gwent and for other young people to put forward their views and share their lived experiences in their own words about the type of sporting offers they want.

The research was conducted across three settings – see below. The different groups and settings were deliberately selected to provide diversity of voice and although there were some similarities in what the young people shared across the groups, there were also some differences, some of which related to the context in which the research was conducted in and the young people that contributed.



PEER RESEARCH GROUPS & SETTINGS

ORGANISATION	SETTING	DEMOGRAPHICS
Aneurin Leisure (Blaenau Gwent)	Community	Young people aged 6-12 participating in Doorstep Sport multi skills sessions or one session in a sports centre.
County in the Community (Newport)	Sports Club	Fit and Fed session participants aged 8-11, engaging in Doorstep Sport style sessions e.g., informal and fun.
Torfaen Sports Development (West Monmouth School & Croesyceiliog School)	Schools	Pupils in Years 8 and 9 - engaged during lessons comprising both males & females.

The findings from the Peer Research sessions were shared with StreetGames who reviewed and checked back with the groups in order to prepare the summary findings below.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PEER RESEARCH

Why are young people not engaging in the current offer provided to them?

In line with the findings of the Phase One desk research, the Peer Researcher's findings also highlighted that there are many different reasons why some young people don't engage with current sporting offers; spanning: individual factors, aspects relating to the social and physical environment they live in as well as factors related to the way organisations and institutions provide their offers. Barriers which were most commonly shared included:

- **Access issues**, and the need for offers to be local, easily accessible and in a location that is deemed as a 'safe' by young people. Young people mentioned facilities such as local MUGAs and schools to avoid the need for transport.
- The challenge of **competing demands** on their time, such as other hobbies and interests. Feedback captured by the Peer Researchers found that this mainly included time spent on activities such as gaming or playing on phones, whereas time constraints highlighted in the desk research had also included additional commitments, such as work and study as well as more informal hobbies and socialising. *This difference could potentially be due to the younger age of the research participants compared with those involved in the desk review.*
- Being put off by **'overly formal'** sports sessions and commitment.

In summary, it can be seen that many of the same 'barriers' highlighted within the desk research were also raised by young people in discussions with the Peer Researchers. However, there was very little discussion about the cost of activities. This is likely to reflect the fact that the Peer Researcher discussions took place in settings where sports activities were already provided free of charge. Meaning that appropriate steps to overcome the barrier of cost were already in place. It is also likely, that some young people didn't want to raise this issue amongst their peers. However, given the current squeeze on many families' disposable income it is highly likely that the cost of taking part in sport and the associated costs of transport and kit will be an issue for many young people.

Has the sporting offer changed and whether there is a need to move towards a more health and wellbeing / non-traditional sport offer?

In line with the findings from the Phase One desk research, the Peer Researchers also heard from some young people how much they enjoy taking part in 'sport for sports sake'. Research undertaken in the school-based setting, heard young people share how much they enjoy participating in 'traditional' sporting activities and do so, to better themselves and seek achievement. Here, the sporting offer predominantly consisted of traditional sports in school and local clubs, meaning this may have influenced how they responded.

Many of these young people shared that they didn't specifically take part in sport to make friends however, they repeatedly mentioned that they did socialise and build friendships through taking part in sport and activities and how involvement in traditional team sports had provided these young people with a sense of belonging.

Amongst other young people consulted by the Peer Researchers, there were some who shared how attending sessions with existing friends was really important, and how it made them feel more '*comfortable*' and '*confident*' to try activities. Those with higher confidence levels believed they would take part in sport regardless of their friends' interests as they wanted to achieve and be responsible for their own success.

These findings highlight that there are different 'triggers' and 'motivators' for taking part in sport amongst young people - often depending on confidence levels. However, what came through very clearly, was that whether or not young people explicitly 'sought' this, opportunities to meet new people, bond with existing friends and socialise through sport was highly valued.

Some young people consulted by the Peer Researchers, also shared that they predominantly, took part in sport for '*other*' reasons than just the activity itself. Their reasons included: wanting to learn about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and the role physical activity can play, with one young person sharing how sport can help you to "*not get fat and be able to run without getting tired so quickly*".

Similarly, in the research conducted in the school setting many young people shared how they would like Physical Education (PE) to focus more on health and wellbeing as "*you need to understand how physical activity can impact your health in the future*". Young people also shared views on the importance of sport in boosting mental wellbeing, sharing how it can make them feel happy and encourage them to achieve things, solve problems and socialise with friends. It was also stated that it can be a positive diversion for some young people.

What do young people want?

Feedback gathered by the Peer Researchers highlighted that many young people in Gwent currently take part in (and enjoy) traditional team-based sports; often due to these types of activities being the main offer available in their local communities or school settings.

However, young people also shared with the Peer Researchers, that they would like to try new/different activities, but often these weren't available locally. Sharing that they would be keen to try new activities through provision of more diverse offers as well as time for 'free play'. Some young people also shared that they would be more inclined to try new sports/activities if these were introduced by a 'trusted' adult in a familiar setting.

In particular, some young people shared a desire for offers which included access to individual sports, which were perceived to provide opportunities to 'feel empowered' and develop their 'fitness levels' and prevent others from 'negatively impacting' their progress within the sport.

As would be expected, there were different opinions amongst the young people consulted, about the 'format' sessions should take – with some young people valuing opportunities for competition, whilst others valued the opportunity to be active in an informal space.

The different aspects deemed important in sports sessions, spanned similar aspects to those raised in the desk review, and included:

- Opportunities to try a variety of sports/activities – including access to both traditional and non-traditional sporting activities;
- Providing space for competitive games for those who want to take part competitively and informal play for those who prefer this style of activity;
- Local, accessible and safe environments;
- Space for socialising and building friendships incorporated into sports sessions and a style of session which was 'fun';
- Sessions delivered by 'trusted adults' and positive role models;
- Opportunities for young people to 'better themselves' and engage in personal development opportunities; and
- Opportunities to explore the role of sport and physical activity in health and wellbeing.

Additional Reflections

It is to be expected, that there were differences of opinion amongst the young people consulted. It is also important to recognise the scope of this research project, and the fact that the Peer Research element was only undertaken amongst three groups of young people in Gwent.

As detailed above, the groups selected were all very different, in terms of the setting where the research took place and the age of the young people involved – all of which will have impacted on their experiences and the views shared. So, for example, as the community research took place in a Doorstep Sport session, the young people shared how much they valued a space 'to have fun, stay active and play with friends', which captures the essence of Doorstep Sport. Whilst in the school environment a traditional sports offer was predominantly delivered in a formal manner and there, most young people shared that they would 'rather play team sports such as rugby, football and netball'.

This deliberate selection of different research settings meant that differing views and opinions were heard.



SUMMARY

Information shared from both the Desk Review and Peer Research phases have provided important insight about what young people currently want from sporting offers.

However, through both phases of the research, it was apparent that different young people have different barriers, 'triggers' and motivators for taking part in sport. For many young people, sport is an appealing activity in itself and a 'hook' to engagement, whilst for others it is sport's wider benefits which motivates participation – i.e. the opportunities to meet new people, socialise with others, develop personally and for wider health and well-being benefits.

Building on this, there was demand for both traditional and non-traditional sporting activities, with a clear desire to access opportunities to a variety of different sports and activities locally.

Given these different wants and motivations, it is vitally important to not make assumptions in advance, and to provide opportunities for young people to share their views and shape offers, as what is 'right' for one group or area may not be 'right' for another.



LEARNING

Young people's views can be effectively captured through formal research as well as via simple discussion and facilitation activities led by community coaches, leaders and teachers. However, as this project has shown, Peer Researchers can also play a really valuable role in this space.

Where young people have been involved in research, we would strongly advocate for follow-on action, to show those involved that their views and opinions have been taken seriously and to give young people the opportunity to undertake social action within their local communities. For example, the Peer Researchers involved in this project will be further supported to develop 'Dragon's Den' style pitches to bid for funding to shape a local offer, based on their research findings.

Going forwards we would advocate for increased opportunities within the sports sector for young people to act as Peer Researchers, Co-creators and Social Action champions. In fact, during the data analysis phase of this project, Peer Researchers highlighted several other areas, that they would like to explore in more depth in the future. These included investigating:

- The role of home and school in sports participation; and
- The role that teachers and parents play in a young person's development.

Where further Peer Research opportunities are provided, it is important to highlight learning from this project, in terms of the training, commitment and amount of support needed to help those involved. As a facilitator of this research, StreetGames provided a significant amount of support throughout the project to the local organisations involved to enable them to: undertake good quality research, 'make sense' of their findings and take action.