

Herts
**Sport &
Physical
Activity**
Partnership



Crime Reduction through Sport

Annual Report (April 2025 – March 2026)

In partnership with



**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE



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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate the impact of Hertfordshire Sport & Physical Activity Partnership's (HSP) Crime Reduction through Sport programme. The report shows how sport-based interventions (SBI), underpinned by SteetGames's Theory of Change, are being used to support vulnerable children and young people, reduce their risk of involvement in crime, violence and exploitation, and improve their wellbeing, resilience and future opportunities.

This report aims to:

- Showcase how targeted sport and mentoring programmes support young people aged 10-25 years who are at risk of serious violence, offending, exclusion from education, exploitation, poverty or trauma.
- Evidence the outcomes achieved through investment in community-based, year-round sport programmes delivered in areas of highest need across Hertfordshire.
- Highlight the value of partnership working between police, local authorities, schools, youth services, community organisations and sport providers in identifying and supporting vulnerable young people.



Executive Summary

The Crime Reduction through Sport Programme demonstrates the power of sport as a vehicle for prevention, engagement, and positive youth development. Delivered across Hertfordshire's most vulnerable communities, the programme supports children and young people aged 10-25 years who are at risk of crime, violence, exploitation, exclusion, or the impacts of poverty and trauma.

Working alongside police, local authorities, schools, youth services, and community organisations, the programme provides consistent, year-round sport and mentoring opportunities that build trusted relationships, develop life skills, and connect young people to wider support services before challenges escalate.

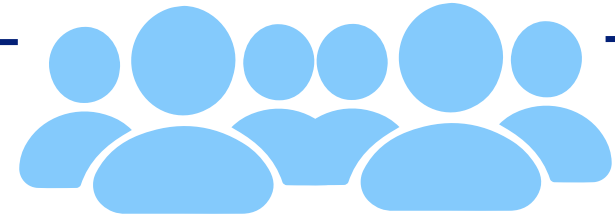
During the reporting period, the programme delivered five commissioned provisions, engaging 175 young people through 114 sessions and generating more than 1,060 attendances. Participants showed measurable improvements in physical activity, wellbeing, problem-solving, responsibility, initiative, and empathy, while reports of loneliness reduced significantly.

The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that sport-based interventions are an effective tool for reducing vulnerability, improving wellbeing, and helping young people build safer, healthier, and more positive futures.



Impact Summary 2025 – 2026

1,060



provision attendances

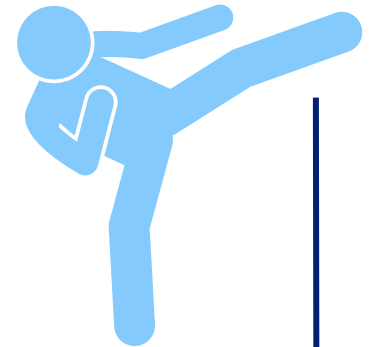
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175

participants



114



sessions delivered



13

presentations
delivered

(influencing key stakeholders
across youth and community
safety services)

120+

partners and
stakeholders
attended the Crime
Reduction through
Sport Conference

5

provisions
commissioned



Project Overview

The Crime Reduction through Sport Phase 2 delivers targeted, place-based support for children and young people most at risk of serious violence across Hertfordshire, including Watford, Stevenage, Waltham Cross and Dacorum. Working through trusted local settings and strong partnerships with schools, police, local authorities, youth services and community organisations, the programme identifies and supports young people early, before issues escalate.

HSP, leads the sport-based element of the programme. Using its expertise in community-led delivery, HSP coordinates trusted local providers to deliver accessible, high-quality opportunities for vulnerable young people.

The programme provides year-round sport, mentoring and personal development through regular small-group sessions. These create safe spaces for young people to build confidence, develop life skills, access mental health support, and progress into education, qualifications, employment and leadership opportunities.

Moving away from fragmented, reactive interventions, Crime Reduction through Sport programme embeds consistent support within communities, using approaches such as StreetGames' Doorstep Sport to prioritise accessibility, inclusion and trusted relationships. By supporting 10 to 25-year-olds experiencing significant challenges and disadvantage, the programme aims to improve wellbeing, build resilience, create safer communities, and strengthen local systems of support for the long term.

Target Participants

The programme focuses on children and young people aged 10 to 25 years who are:

- At risk of involvement in serious violence
- Vulnerable to exploitation or offending
- Excluded or at risk of exclusion from education
- Experiencing poverty, trauma or adverse childhood experiences

Delivery works with smaller cohorts to provide intensive, personalised support, typically engaging between 18 and 30 children or young people per programme cycle.



Delivery and Referral Partners

The programme is underpinned by strong multi-agency partnerships, enabling early identification, referral and sustained support.

Core delivery partners include:

- Forever Young People
- Sporting Aid
- Sporting Inspirations
- Stevenage Football Club Foundation
- Watford FC Community Sports & Education Trust
- West Herts ABC and Educational Support

Referral partners include:

- Hertfordshire Constabulary and neighbourhood policing teams
- Local authorities and borough councils
- Youth services and Families First
- Education partners including schools Alternative Provision Academies

These partnerships ensure that young people at greatest risk are identified early and receive coordinated, wraparound support.



Programme Delivery

A Structured, Year Round Offer

- 12 month programmes delivering up to 50 weeks of activity each year
- Weekly sessions combining sport and mentoring
- Consistent, safe community venues to build trust and routine

Sport Plus Interventions

Sport acts as the gateway to deeper support:

- Access to qualifications such as sports leadership awards
- Mentoring and safe adult relationships
- Personal development and life skills
- Mental health and resilience support
- Leadership and volunteering opportunities

Programmes typically include:

- 1 to 2 hour sport sessions
- Structured mentoring alongside activity
- Small group or one to one support for higher need young people

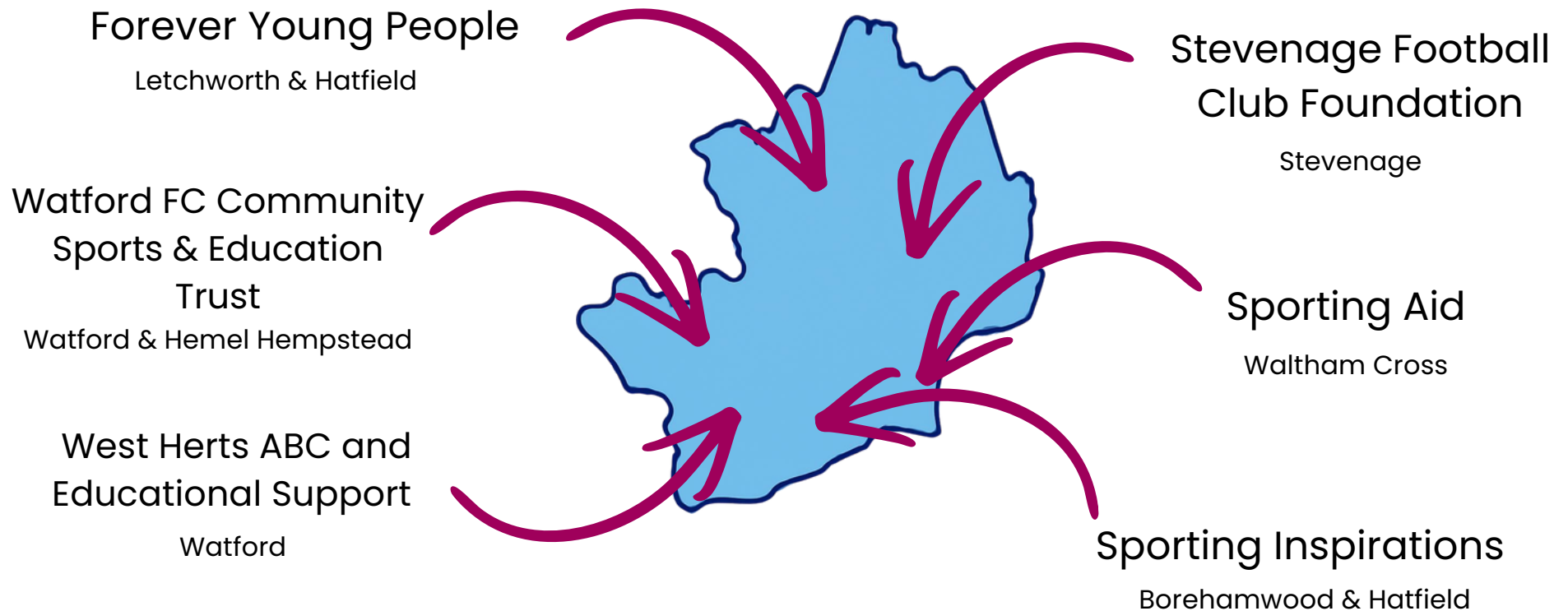


Delivery Locations

Delivery is targeted in communities with high levels of youth vulnerability and serious violence across Hertfordshire:

- Watford
- Hemel Hempstead
- Letchworth
- Stevenage
- Waltham Cross
- Hatfield
- Borehamwood

This place based approach ensures support is embedded directly within neighbourhoods where children and young people are most at risk.



Delivery Approach

The Crime Reduction through Sport programme has been strongly informed by StreetGames' evidence-led approach to sport as a mechanism for prevention and early intervention. Rather than viewing sport as an end in itself, the programme adopts a Sport Plus model, using sport as a vehicle to achieve wider outcomes such as reducing offending, anti-social behaviour and serious violence.

This approach focuses on strengthening protective factors including trusted adult relationships, emotional regulation, positive identity, social connection and community belonging, while reducing the risk factors associated with youth violence and offending.

A key element has been the Communities of Practice to ensure that the programme is not delivered in isolation but as part of a wider system of support for children and young people. These sessions bring together community sports organisations and voluntary sector partners to:

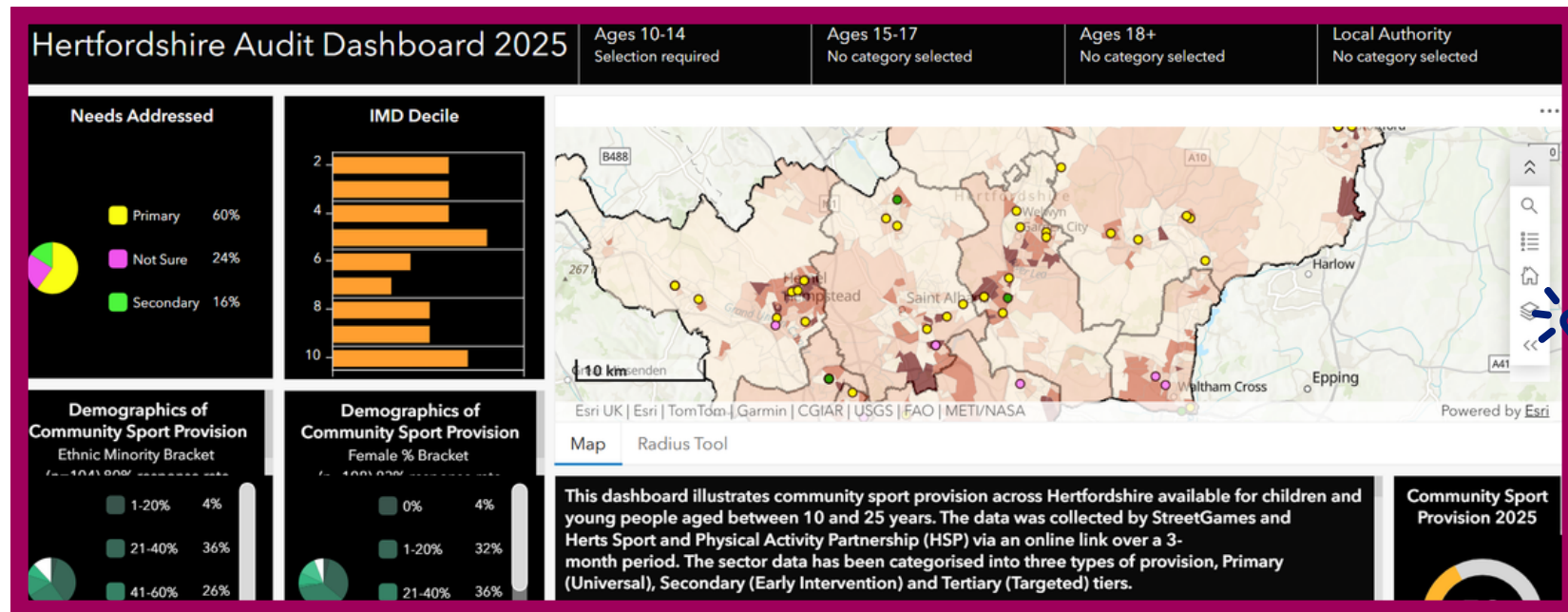
- Share evidence, learning and good practice.
- Develop a common understanding of trauma-informed and youth-centred approaches.
- Strengthen local referral pathways and partnership working.
- Improve the quality and consistency of crime reduction interventions delivered through sport.
- Create opportunities for peer support and collaborative problem solving.

Find out
more



Theory of
Change

The Hertfordshire Community Sport & Serious Violence Dashboard



Click Here

The Dashboard presents community sport provision data across Hertfordshire, mapped at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA). The interactive map contains several data layers whose visibility can be toggled using the layer filter in the top right corner of the map along with a legend button, which explains the colour coding for any layers that are currently visible. The search icon allows users to search and zoom in on a particular area or address. All graphs/charts are interactive (excluding Sports Delivered), and the user can click on a value to filter provision on the map according to the users needs.

Outcomes

Survey Data

1 in 4 participants reported that a SBI programme provided the only physical activity they undertook each week. This finding came from national StreetGames data, which also demonstrated increased physical activity levels among participants. Based on responses from more than 1,000 people across the UK, including Hertfordshire, SBI programmes coordinated through HSP successfully engaged some of the county's least active children and young people.

Almost half (48%) of children and young people in Hertfordshire are not active enough, according to the latest Active Lives survey. Activity levels are significantly lower among children from less affluent families, and communities experiencing greater inequalities also tend to see higher levels of visible crime.

As part of the national dataset of SBI's, Hertfordshire community organisations collected 106 survey responses. The analysis presented in the following pages is based on these responses and compares two groups: participants who had attended for less than two months and were completing the survey for the first time, and participants who had attended for more than six months. All data was collected anonymously and analysed by StreetGames at a cohort level.

Socio-Emotional Development

High-quality staff practice and well-designed SBI sessions help children and young people stay engaged. Over time, this supports the development of socio-emotional skills, with benefits that extend beyond the sessions, into home, school, friendships, and later life.

Stronger socio-emotional skills are linked to better outcomes in adulthood, including improved mental and physical health, education, employment, financial stability, housing, relationships, and personal safety (YMCA George Williams College, 2024).

To track progress, we use the Youth Rating of Socio-emotional Skills (YRSS) tool (Centre for Youth Impact, YMCA GWC & DCMS, 2022). This measures skill development on a 1–5 scale for young people taking part in SBI sessions.

Find out more
about the YRSS



Improvements in responsibility indicate greater ownership and commitment, supported by consistent participation and team roles. Gains in initiative reflect increased confidence and proactive engagement, encouraged by opportunities to lead and try new activities. Limited change in teamwork may suggest these skills were already well established or require longer-term development.

Responsibility

The increase in problem-solving reflects meaningful growth in children's ability to navigate challenges and apply solutions, likely driven by the structured, hands-on nature of sports. Minimal change in emotional management suggests a relatively high starting point, with only modest gains over the intervention period.

Problem Solving

Notably, the rise in empathy highlights an enhanced ability to understand and connect with others, likely fostered through collaborative and social aspects of sport.

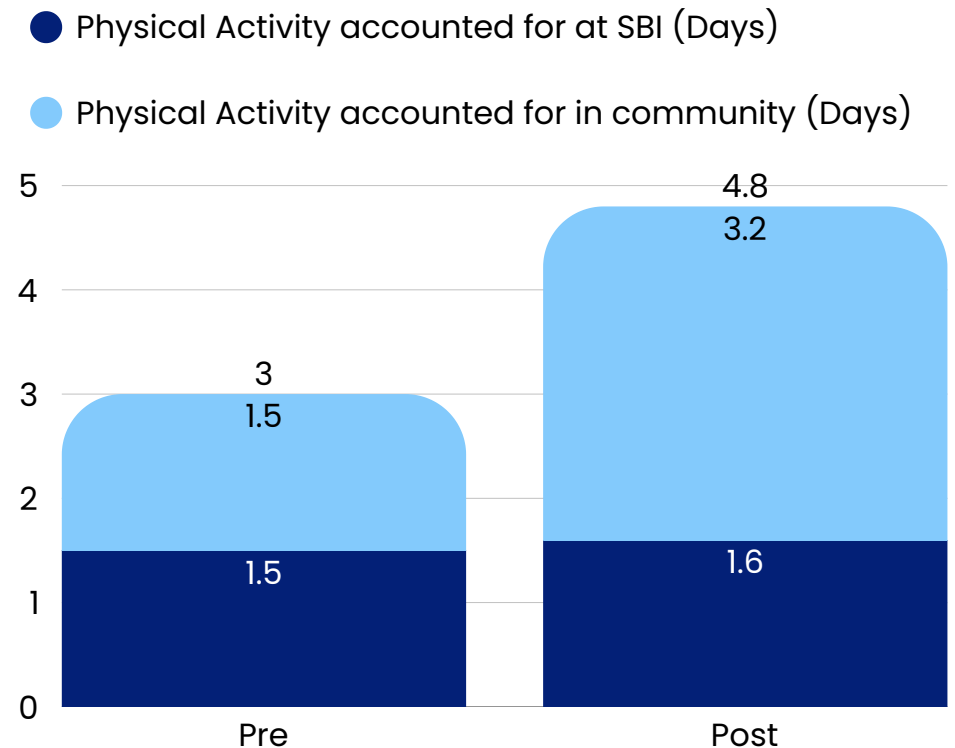
Empathy

Physical Activity Levels

The UK Chief Medical Officer recommends that children and young people (5–18 years) achieve an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily across the week. This supports physical health, confidence, condition management, and social development.

As shown below, the number of days that participants met this daily target rose by 60%—from 3 to 4.8 days per week overall.

SBI's accounted for 50% of total activity at baseline and 33% at follow-up. This highlights the grant's role in helping less active participants build toward recommended levels, while also suggesting many went on to engage in additional physical activity beyond the programme.



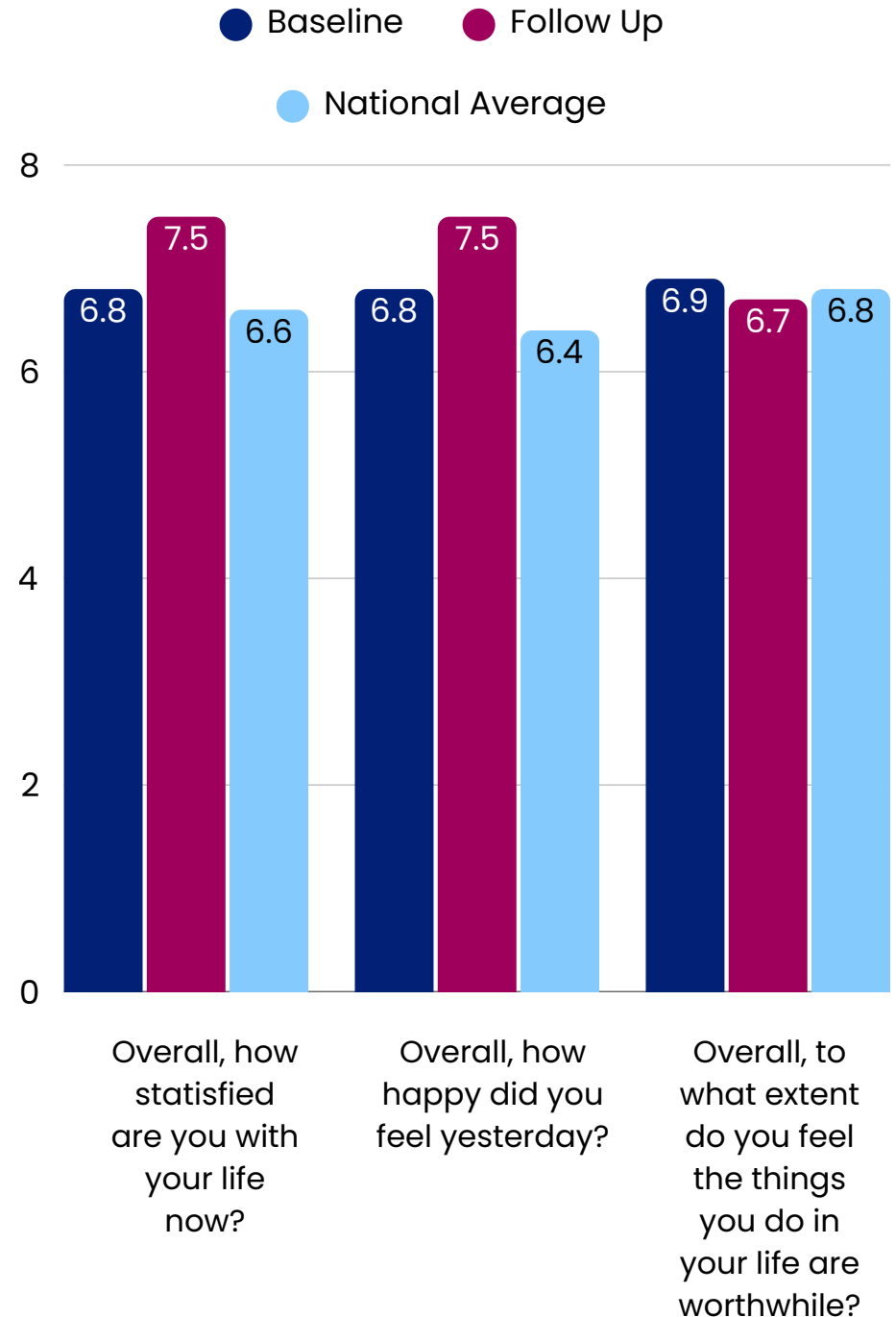
Wellbeing

Participation in sport and physical activity improves wellbeing, boosting happiness and self-esteem while reducing stress, anxiety and depression in children and young people.

Using the ONS wellbeing measures (1–10 scale), participants reported positive outcomes across the programme:

- Life satisfaction: Scores were above average at baseline and improved further at follow-up. SBI's can boost wellbeing by increasing confidence, social connections and belonging.
- Happiness: Participants started slightly above the national average and, among attendees, exceeded it by +1.1 points. SBI's support happiness through enjoyable physical activity, social interaction and trusted relationships.
- Sense of purpose: Scores remained close to the national average with little change. This is unsurprising, as purpose and meaning often take longer to develop than happiness or life satisfaction.

Overall, SBI's are delivering clear improvements in happiness and life satisfaction, with potential for longer-term gains in purpose and meaning.



Loneliness

The Government's Loneliness Strategy highlights loneliness as a serious public health issue, linked to early mortality and comparable in impact to smoking or obesity. It is associated with higher risks of inactivity, unhealthy behaviours, depression, low self-esteem, poor sleep, and heightened stress. Loneliness can also distort how people perceive others' behaviour, increasing social anxiety and withdrawal, and reinforcing a harmful cycle. The ONS loneliness measure captures this subjective experience among children and young people.

Participation in SBI's can play a key role in addressing this, offering consistent opportunities for children and young people to form friendships, feel a sense of belonging, and build supportive networks.

Data suggests a positive impact indicating improved social connection and reduced feelings of loneliness among participants.

- Frequent loneliness ("often/always") decreased from 3% to 0%
- Lonely some of the time decreased from 28% to 8%
- Hardly ever lonely increased from 24% to 48%



Overall, there was a meaningful shift from loneliness toward feeling hardly ever lonely.



Case Study

SPORTINGAID

Turning Risk into Resilience through Sport

START

Starting Point

- School suspension following anti-social behaviour
- Associated with peers linked to theft and shoplifting
- Reluctant to engage with support
- Possible underlying ADHD needs
- Limited safe adult relationships



Sport Based Intervention

- Weekly boxing sessions
- One-to-one mentoring
- Emotional regulation coaching
- Decision-making support
- Trusted coach relationship
- Foster carer and multi-agency support



Outcomes

- ✓ No further suspensions
- ✓ No anti-social behaviour incidents
- ✓ Improved emotional regulation
- ✓ Increased confidence and communication
- ✓ Positive relationships with safe adults
- ✓ Weekly engagement in boxing
- ✓ Assessment pathway accessed for ADHD support

Impact

This child's journey demonstrates how early, sport-based intervention, combined with credible role models and tailored mentoring, can disrupt pathways into crime. By addressing both behaviour and underlying needs, the programme supports a sustained shift away from risk-taking behaviours towards positive engagement, resilience, and aspiration.

Conclusion

The Crime Reduction through Sport programme demonstrates that sport is far more than physical activity; it is a powerful tool for prevention, connection and positive change. Through trusted relationships, targeted support and strong partnership working, vulnerable young people have developed greater confidence, resilience, wellbeing and social connection, while reducing risk factors associated with crime and exploitation.

The evidence is clear: when HSP and its partners invest early, work collaboratively and place children and young people at the centre of support, we create safer communities and brighter futures. Continued investment in sport-based prevention will be critical in ensuring more children and young people have the opportunity to thrive, belong and fulfil their potential.

For further information about this report, please contact crimereduction@herts.ac.uk

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