

# MAYOR OF LONDON



## BASKETBALL IN LONDON: ***THE STATE OF PLAY***

In support of the Mayor of London's Basketball Taskforce

**2026 INITIAL REPORT**





**COPYRIGHT**  
**Greater London Authority**  
**January 2026**

Published by  
Greater London Authority  
City Hall  
Kamal Chunchie Way  
London E16 1ZE

Enquiries:  
[Basketball.taskforce@london.gov.uk](mailto:Basketball.taskforce@london.gov.uk)

Photographs ©

Copies of this report are available  
from [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

## Foreword from the London Basketball Taskforce Chair

Basketball isn't just a game – it is a way for young people to come together, find a bit of freedom, and carve out their own space in the community. Whether it was the sound of a ball hitting the tarmac in the local park or the buzz around weekend tournaments, you can feel the energy and connection it brings. Growing up in North London, those hours passed with my friends on the court showed me early on that sport isn't just about winning – it's about belonging. Connecting music, fashion, and digital culture like no other sport, for many of us it's a source of pride and identity.

And basketball's popularity continues to grow, with more than 220,000 young Londoners playing regularly across schools, parks, clubs and community venues. It is the fastest growing sport amongst young people and, although undeniably shaped by the urban communities where the game initially gained popularity, an increasing diversity of players are picking up a ball to shoot hoops. This first report from Mayor's Basketball Taskforce couldn't have come at a more important time.

I was honoured to be asked to chair the Taskforce, following discussions with NBA leadership in 2024. Working alongside leaders from sport, education, culture, business and local government we aim to bring focus to how we could further coordinate the growth of the sport in London. We want to explore how we could grow the game's sustainability and create positive opportunities for young Londoners, whilst at the same time attracting and benefitting from world class events.

Our initial report summarises what we heard through extensive engagement with communities and stakeholders; setting out where basketball is strong, where it is struggling, and what we can do next together. Our aim is not to provide a detailed delivery plan, and we have no remit over national governance or league issues, which need resolving at a national level. Our aim is to inspire all those who care about basketball in London, by setting out the practical steps we can make to support its grassroots. Because the outlook is positive. London has the talent, audiences and global profile to make basketball a genuine force for inclusion, health, skills and civic pride.

Nadeem Javaid,

**Mayoral Director, Global Relations and Communities**

*"Basketball speaks to London's spirit. It is accessible, creative, and rooted in our communities. For many young Londoners, particularly those facing disadvantage, it offers confidence, mentorship, and a sense of belonging.*

*The Mayor's Basketball Taskforce brings together key decision makers and sector leaders to help the game reach its full potential in London, and I am grateful to the passionate individuals who are shaping the city's basketball ecosystem.*

*This report reflects our commitment to understanding both the barriers holding the sport back and the practical actions needed to support its growth. It provides a strong foundation for working with partners to ensure basketball can deliver lasting social, cultural, and economic benefits for Londoners, on and off the court."*

***Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard,***  
***Deputy Mayor for Communities and Social Justice.***

*"Ensuring that people across the country have access to quality, affordable facilities is critical to opening our sport up to many more people. Developing more facilities is critical to giving more children the opportunity to play and as a result be more physically active. This evidence based report supports this view and sets out the areas to be tackled to turn potential into reality. Basketball England looks forward to working with partners to make good its recommendations."*

***Nigel Walker***  
***Interim CEO, Basketball England***

*"Basketball is far more than a game in London – it is a powerful platform for opportunity, belonging and aspiration. As London's sporting university, the University of East London sees daily how basketball connects education, health, employability and community pride, particularly for young people and communities that too often face barriers to opportunity. This report sets out a compelling, evidence-based case for coordinated investment in facilities, pathways and people, and we stand ready to work with the Mayor of London, the Basketball Taskforce and partners across the city to help ensure basketball fulfils its potential as a driver of social mobility, inclusion and civic renewal."*

***Professor Amanda Broderick***  
***Vice-Chancellor & President, University of East London***  
***and Chair of British Universities & Colleges Sport***



# CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	06
--------------------------	----

---

## **SECTION 1**

Overview of Basketball in London	10
----------------------------------	----

---

## **SECTION 2**

Major Events in London Basketball	16
-----------------------------------	----

---

## **SECTION 3**

Infrastructure and Facilities	24
-------------------------------	----

---

## **SECTION 4**

Professional Pathways	34
-----------------------	----

---

## **SECTION 5**

Youth and Community Engagement in London Basketball	42
--	----

---

## **SECTION 6**

Strategic Recommendations	49
---------------------------	----

---

## **SECTION 7**

Mayor's Basketball Taskforce	52
------------------------------	----

---

## **APPENDIX 1.**

Methodology	54
-------------	----

---

## **APPENDIX 2**

Source Material	61
-----------------	----

---



# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## Overview:

Basketball is one of London's most popular and culturally significant sports, with deep roots in diverse communities and growing international visibility. Nationally, around 1.55 million people play basketball weekly. In London, more than 500,000 people play regularly, supported by 108 registered clubs and 16,732 Basketball England members, alongside a thriving informal scene in parks and estates<sup>1</sup>.

The sport's appeal is amplified by its cultural relevance and accessibility. It offers low-cost, high-impact opportunities for young people to be active, build confidence and connections, and develop skills. Major events such as the NBA's return to London in January 2026, the London Lions' historic EuroCup Women victory in 2024, and wheelchair basketball clubs like London Titans highlight the city's growing profile and potential.

This report draws on extensive engagement: a public Call for Evidence (487 open form responses), a Community Survey (218 questionnaire submissions) across all London boroughs, stakeholder workshops and Taskforce member discussions. Contributions reveal strong enthusiasm for basketball but also systemic challenges that limit growth. The most pressing issue is infrastructure. Nearly half of respondents rated current facilities below average, and informal assessments suggest many outdoor courts are in disrepair. Indoor space is scarce

and often unaffordable, making access a major barrier. Workforce development is another critical concern: 61.6% of respondents rated career opportunities in basketball as poor or very poor, citing limited paid roles and unclear progression pathways. <sup>2</sup>Young people remain central to the sport's future, with 35% of respondents identifying 11–18-year-olds as the top priority for development. Events are widely seen as catalysts for growth, with 93.2% rating major events as important or very important to London's basketball ecosystem.

Despite these challenges, opportunities abound. Community-led court refurbishments demonstrate the impact of targeted investment. Programmes like the London Coaches Program are building workforce capacity, while inclusive formats such as 3x3 and wheelchair basketball offer scalable, low-cost ways to engage more Londoners. Linking elite fixtures to grassroots outreach can further boost participation and civic pride. And, of course, young people remain central to the sport's future, with 35% of respondents identifying 11–18-year-olds as the top priority for development.

<sup>1</sup> As of 2023, Sport England reports that over 222,000 young people and 304,700 adults in London play basketball regularly (weekly data for young people and twice a month for adults)

<sup>2</sup> Statistics here, and elsewhere in the report where stated, have been drawn from a multi-tool methodological framework. Please see Methodology for further detail

**10 sector-wide recommendations** are set out within this report to guide the next phase of development in London. These recommendations cover facilities, workforce, youth pathways, events, collaborative work, data sharing, and more. They are designed for collective action across the basketball ecosystem and will require collaboration between governing bodies, clubs, local authorities, education providers, and community organisations.

1	Develop local, high-quality, basketball-focused spaces & facilities
2	Build basketball workforce capacity
3	Improve Strategic Collaboration
4	Grow engagement with basketball and amplify awareness of the sport
5	Integrate Basketball into School Programmes and PE Pathways
6	Support Grassroots Clubs sustainability
7	Support Basketball Inclusion in Borough-Level urban development, sport and physical activity, and youth strategies
8	Explore feasibility of a London Basketball Data & Impact Observatory
9	Harness Collaborative Youth Basketball Leadership Programmes
10	Review existing talent pathway strategies



**Key Highlights:**

Total home-spectator figures for the home team, the London Lions, amassed approx. **100,000** for the 2022-23 season.

BBL Playoff Finals at the O2 also attracted record crowds of over **15,300 spectators**.

In 2024, the Lions' women's team made history by winning the EuroCup Women's Finals, becoming Britain's first European champions in basketball.



**48.3%** of respondents from London's basketball community consider current facilities to be below average. Relatedly, **24.94%** of basketball community members say local facilities are the most significant catalyst for development, with **47.33%** also noting improvements to both indoor and outdoor courts would have the biggest impact.

**62%** of Londoners express pride when major basketball events are hosted in the city, and **93.2%** of the city's respondents to the community survey suggest such events are considerably important to London-focused development.

London Titans' success as Premier Division Wheelchair Basketball Champions, and the support of **6 Wheelchair teams** (Premier, Women's & Junior-level) and **over 250 wheelchair players to date**.

**35.19%** of respondents from London's basketball community suggest the **adolescent age group (11-18ys)** as **the top priority for development**, reflecting a pivotal stage where young people transition from casual play to structured competition, forge stronger identities, and develop skill specialisation.

Indicating a significant level of dissatisfaction and concern about the viability of long-term careers in the sport, **61.6%** of basketball community respondents note that current career opportunities in the sport are either poor or very poor.



## SECTION 1

# OVERVIEW OF BASKETBALL IN LONDON

Strategic Significance of the Capital's  
Basketball Ecosystem

1.1 Introduction

Basketball in London is dynamic and culturally resonant. It engages hundreds of thousands of residents, resonates with London’s creative economy, and provides inclusive, low-cost routes into physical activity. This section provides an overview of the current landscape: participation, stakeholders, infrastructure, workforce and events, drawing on the engagement set out in the Methodology.

1.2 Participation and Popularity

Basketball has become one of the most played team sports in London. Nationally, around 1.55 million people play basketball weekly, and London accounts for a significant share of this activity. More than 220,000 Londoners play regularly, supported by 108 registered clubs and 16,732 Basketball England members. Informal play remains vital with parks, estates and multi-use games areas hosting thousands of players each week. The sport’s cultural relevance, linked to music, fashion and social media, makes it particularly popular among young people and diverse communities. However, critical gaps exist between the sport’s popularity, grassroots activity and institutional investment in basketball.

Highlights:
1.55 million people play basketball weekly across the UK.
220,000+ Londoners play regularly.
London Lions home attendances reached ~100,000 in 2022–23.
62% of survey respondents feel proud when London hosts major basketball events



1.3 Key Stakeholders and Strategic Collaborations

London’s basketball ecosystem is sustained by a broad coalition of stakeholders spanning community organisations, educational institutions, professional leagues, and governmental bodies. Governing bodies such as Basketball England and British Wheelchair Basketball set national strategies and talent systems. Basketball England’s recent plans focus on growing participation, creating world-class talent pathways and improving infrastructure, while British Wheelchair Basketball champions inclusion, adaptive sport development, and supports the advancement of British wheelchair teams.

Professional clubs like the London Lions elevate visibility and provide aspirational pathways, while education partners, including schools, colleges, universities and the London School of Basketball, connect participation with academic and career routes. The London Basketball Association (LBA) exemplifies basketball’s social impact, reporting thousands of participants and significant social value through health and employability outcomes. Local authorities and the Greater London Authority (GLA) enable infrastructure investment and fund community sport programmes.

Corporate and venue partners such as AEG/The O2 and leisure operators support events and facilities. Those stakeholders consistently call for clearer roles, shared priorities and joined-up planning, particularly on facilities, workforce and inclusivity.

Highlights:

London School of Basketball operates across **23 boroughs**, supporting **14,000+** players and 189 teams.

JD Ball Out 3x3 Tour reached **142,000+** participants during a 2-day finals event in London.

LBA (London Basketball Association) reports **£18.7m** in social value savings linked to health and youth engagement.

**108** registered clubs and **16,732** Basketball England members in London.



## 1.4 Club Ecosystem and Community Infrastructure

At the heart of London's basketball landscape is a vibrant network of community clubs that provide inclusive, accessible pathways for participation and development. Clubs such as London Thunder, Brixton TopCats, Haringey Heat, Newham Youngbloods, or Richmond Knights deliver training and competition for children, young people and adults, provide safe spaces and role models, and create routes into coaching, officiating and volunteering.

Many clubs champion inclusion, supporting women and girls, disabled players and LGBTQ+ participants. Additionally, the strong performance of London's four wheelchair basketball clubs (London Titans, Brixton Ballers, Hackney Sparrow (Sparrows WBC) and East London Phoenix (affiliated with the University of East London), have provided a strong foundation and opportunity to widen participation, inclusion and engagement for the sport, and further investment and development opportunities.

Clubs also act as community anchors, offering mentorship and social support, but face persistent challenges: limited court time, high costs, governance pressures and reliance on short-term grants create instability and restrict growth. Despite these constraints, grassroots energy remains strong, and clubs are central to sustaining participation and talent pathways across London.

## 1.5 Facilities and Infrastructure

Infrastructure remains the most pressing challenge. Nearly half (48.3%) of survey respondents rated current facilities below average, and informal assessments suggest many outdoor courts need resurfacing, lighting and safety upgrades. An estimated 80–90% of public courts are in disrepair and indoor access is limited and often prohibitively expensive.

Still, positive examples exist: community-led refurbishments at Clapham Common and Hendon Park have improved safety, visibility and year-round play. Looking ahead, stakeholders emphasise the need for clear London standards for basketball-ready design, covering court surfaces, rims, lighting, run-offs and inclusive access; and a pipeline of borough hubs with multi-court capacity to host training, leagues and mid-scale events.



1.6 Workforce Development and Employability

The sport relies heavily on volunteers, and workforce development is a critical concern. 61.6% of respondents rated career opportunities as poor or very poor, citing limited paid roles and unclear progression. Initiatives such as the Mayor of London partnership with the NBA, the London Coaches Program (delivered by Basketball England), are expanding the pool of trained coaches while offering free play opportunities to young Londoners. Other initiatives, such as the Hoopstars Coaching Courses and Instructional Camps run by the Hoopsfix Foundation, further expand the coaching pipeline while developing leadership skills and community engagement.

Highlights:

**London Coaches Program:** 427 coaches enrolled by September 2025, and 11,268 young people engaged by these coaches (Programme now extended to 2026).

Next steps should include scaling coach development, growing referee and table official pathways, creating paid community roles in priority boroughs and building a peer network for continuous professional development.

1.7 Strategic Events and International Profile

London has a strong track record of hosting major basketball events, including NBA fixtures and European club competitions. The NBA’s return in January 2026 further elevates the city’s profile. It will be the 10th NBA regular-season game in London and the 19th NBA game in the UK since 1993, which will mean London hosting more NBA games than any city outside of the US.

The return of the NBA has been supported by a suite of youth participation events held across 2025. The culmination of which involved a Junior NBA 3x3 Basketball Final held on Trafalgar Square delivered by the NBA and London Marathon Events, and supported by the Mayor of London.

Community and mid-scale events, such as Ball Out 3x3 and London Youth Games tournaments, deepen local engagement and create visible milestones for players and clubs.

Basketball community respondents have strongly indicated that major events are critically important to the sport’s development in the city. 93.2% of respondents rating major basketball events as either “important” (29.3%) or “very important” (63.9%). This consensus reflects a shared understanding that events are not just spectacles but are strategic instruments for growth.



1.8 Challenges, Opportunities and Investment

Despite its momentum, basketball in London faces structural and operational challenges: infrastructure bottlenecks, affordability issues, fragmented governance, workforce burnout, uneven media visibility and gaps in inclusive provision for women, girls and disabled players. At the same time, development opportunities are significant. Basketball is growing in popularity fast, particularly among young people in urban communities, and plays a distinctive role in supporting skills development, confidence, and belonging.

London’s universities represent an underused asset within the system, with potential to support facilities, competition, and workforce pathways across coaching, officiating, sport science and sport management. Stronger collaboration between education providers and clubs could help stabilise progression routes and retain talent within the capital.

Targeted investment has already demonstrated impact. The Mayor of London’s Go! London collaboration with London Marathon Foundation and Sport England (supported by London Sport and London Marathon Events) has become an important contributor to basketball development, directing a significant proportion of its investment toward basketball-led and basketball-inclusive activity across London. Funded organisations have used this support to remove financial barriers, strengthen safeguarding and workforce capacity, and

create clearer pathways into leadership, qualifications and employment for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Alongside the growth of formats such as 3x3 basketball, which offer flexible and low-cost participation opportunities, this evidence reinforces the case for sustained, strategic investment in the sport.

Key Challenges:
Facility access and quality of space concerns across boroughs.
Volunteer burnout and lack of paid workforce roles.
Fragmented talent pathways and limited domestic progression routes.
Strategic Opportunities:
Potential for greater social return-on-investment by linking basketball initiatives to youth, education and community programming (e.g., The LBA programme has contributed to a noted £18.7m in social cost savings).
3x3 basketball offers scalable, low-cost urban activation.
Strong youth engagement, especially in IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) 1–4 zones.



## SECTION 2

# MAJOR EVENTS IN LONDON BASKETBALL

Strategic Value, Impact, and Future Potential of International  
and Domestic Basketball Events



## 2.1 Introduction

Major basketball events have become central to London's evolving sports identity, offering both economic stimulus and cultural resonance. Events also serve as entry points for new audiences, particularly youth and underserved communities, and provide volunteering and career opportunities that support the sport and audience engagement. Yet, community members have also noted event accessibility presents a challenge for wider engagement and visibility of the sport.

**[What do you see as the main challenges or barriers currently facing basketball development in London?]**

*"Basketball events happening in places that aren't home to the most fortunate."  
(Community Survey)*

*"People not participating enough in supporting games and people not knowing enough about the basketball games in London."  
(Community Survey)*

However, from NBA regular-season games to European club competitions and grassroots showcases, the city has demonstrated its capacity to host high-profile fixtures that engage diverse audiences and stimulate local development. As one basketball community contributor noted,

***"London is uniquely positioned to become a premier basketball event hub, thanks to its global city status, diverse population, and growing basketball culture." (CfE)***

Nonetheless, sustaining this momentum requires strategic investment, infrastructure upgrades, and a cohesive event-hosting framework that aligns elite competition with community engagement.





## 2.2 Historical Legacy and Economic Impact

Between 2011 and 2019, London hosted 13 NBA regular-season games at The O2 Arena, excluding 2012 due to Olympic preparations. These events consistently sold out the venue's 18,689-seat basketball configuration, underscoring strong demand and commercial viability. Beyond the spectacle value, the NBA London Games were strategic assets showcasing London as a premier international sports and entertainment destination. According to a 2015 NBA Europe report, the games generated substantial tourism-related spending, with corporate sponsors such as Nike and Adidas activating pan-European marketing campaigns that amplified the city's global visibility.

Comparative analysis with other major sports events further highlights basketball's economic potential.

The Major League Baseball London Series, for example, generated nearly £37 million for the city's economy in 2019, attracting 120,000 attendees across two games<sup>3</sup>. While precise figures for NBA events' wider impacts remain difficult to accurately assess, similar levels of visitor expenditure—on accommodation, dining, transport, and attractions—are likely, given the scale and international draw of the games. These outcomes affirm basketball's capacity to contribute meaningfully to London's sports economy and justify further investment in event hosting. As one local inhabitant has observed,

***"More touring events—the O2 sold out for two Team USA Olympic warm-up games last summer—but please don't hold more events at the O2, it's way too expensive."***  
(CfE)



3 [Mitel and MLB Present London Series 2019 gives £37m boost to London's economy | Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park](#)

### 2.3 Recent Achievements and Emerging Momentum

Alongside the NBA, the London Lions have emerged as central figures in the city's basketball renaissance. In 2024, the Lions' Women's team made history by winning the EuroCup Women's Finals, becoming Britain's first European champions in basketball. The men's team reached the EuroCup semi-finals, further solidifying their status as a competitive force in European basketball. As members of London's basketball community summarised,

***"The London Lions have raised the sport's profile significantly. The men's team reached the EuroCup semi-finals, while the women's team won the EuroCup title which was the first British side to do so." (CfE)***

***"Capitalising on the London Lions' success—their rise as a competitive BBL and European club gives the city a flagship team to rally around. Hosting more BBL games, playoff series, and European fixtures in top-tier arenas can raise the sport's profile locally and internationally." (CfE)***

These achievements have elevated the profile of basketball in London and demonstrated the city's potential to compete at the highest levels of European sport. The Lions' average home attendance (ranging from 2,000 to 4,000 per game across 33 fixtures) totals between 79,000 and 112,000 annually. Their success offers a rallying point for fans and stakeholders alike.

Yet, London's position as a host city of global sport mega-events is not, invariably, guaranteed. Cities such as Paris, Berlin, and emerging Middle Eastern markets are submitting aggressive bids for NBA and FIBA events, backed by infrastructure packages and coordinated strategies. Without a unified bid framework, linking facilities such as the AEG O2 Arena, boroughs, the GLA, and corporate and community partners, London risks losing its competitive edge. Achieving event legacy ambitions, however, may be a challenge in the city if community-level events remain under-supported and/or ad-hoc and local authority resource significantly stretched. Local leagues and youth competitions often lack logistical and marketing resources, limiting outreach and capacities to fill their aspirations.





## 2.4 Infrastructure and Hosting Capacity

Despite London's proven track record, its current infrastructure is not sufficient to meet with the ambitions of hosting major basketball events. The O2 Arena remains Europe's premier indoor venue, but its high operating costs limit accessibility for domestic teams and mid-scale competitions. There is a pronounced gap between event aspirations and available facilities, particularly for events requiring 3,000–7,000 seats. As one contributor noted,

***"Infrastructure improvements [are] needed to enhance event hosting capabilities—to elevate London's ability to host high-profile basketball events, ranging from grassroots tournaments to professional league games and international fixtures."***

Investing in medium scale venues with modern amenities, VIP suites, media facilities, quality hospitality areas, and accessible seating, presents a compelling offer and would make the city more attractive to national and international basketball bodies. Improvement here should include, for example, high-quality training and warm-up spaces for teams, as well as enhancements to the overall spectator experience (e.g., improved seating, lighting, sightlines, hospitality). In addition, it is important consider location and access: "Good public transport links, parking, and wayfinding signage around venues improve accessibility." (CfE)





## 2.5 Strategic Venue Utilisation and Legacy Assets

London's sport mega-event legacy assets offer untapped potential. Here, infrastructure from the 2012 Olympics (e.g., University and school training facilities and venues), and recent events like the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games (where London hosted international training facilities), provides opportunities for sustainable venue use. Additionally, with The Mayor recently announcing support for a bespoke basketball facility in the city, there exist opportunities to ensure any new venues reflect the community's high expectations regarding accessibility, quality, and experience. As one contributor noted,

***"Leveraging multi-sport venues post-2025...these can be repurposed or booked for basketball tournaments, exhibitions, and festivals." (CfE)***

***"More integration with schools and pathways [...] School gyms made available for local teams to use outside of school hours." (Community Survey)***

Accordingly, the London Lions recent announcement in November 2025 on the completion of the first phase of its feasibility study on the development of a dedicated home court for the team and flagship space for the sport in the city is a welcome and critical next step.<sup>4</sup>

***"London Lions getting a home court is the perfect start. Once this happens, Londoners will have a prime venue to attend and watch high-level games, creating more fans of the sport at local level." (CfE)***

***Furthermore, "The London Lions should then align with youth teams in the capital to join forces to make it more attractive for young people to see that it is possible to reach the high level of playing the sport." (CfE)***



4 [London Lions Complete First Phase In Plan For New London Arena](#)

## 2.6 Cultural Resonance, Media Visibility & Participation Growth

Basketball community respondents acknowledge the importance of large-scale events to the sport's prestige and global connectivity in the city. However, it is notable that an even larger number of respondents identified mid- and community-level events as strategic opportunities to nurture talent, build local pride, and create structured progression routes from grassroots to elite levels. For example, 19.76% of respondents identified youth tournaments as the most beneficial, followed by 17.4% support for community basketball festivals, 14.76% for professional league games, and 12.38% for street/urban basketball forms. As further respondents noted too,

***"More school tournaments, more street basketball and additional funding for coach development." (Community Survey)***

***"More recreational basketball for children and young people." (Community Survey)***

This may point to a perceived disconnect between grassroots community and large-scale international events, or it may highlight a need for a more varied ecosystem of event-types that are supported more regularly across the city.

Major basketball events in London have further catalysed cultural engagement and grassroots participation. The London International Basketball Invitational in 2011, held at the Olympic Park's Copper Box Basketball Arena, marked a turning point in the sport's domestic visibility.

The NBA London Games, in particular, played a crucial role in promoting basketball across the UK, and may have contributed to the 30% surge in national participation between 2010 and 2020, with adult participation figures in 2023 reported to be 344,400<sup>5</sup>.

However, visibility remains a persistent challenge. As one contributor noted,

***"Basketball in London struggles with visibility. The British Basketball League (BBL) and National Basketball League (NBL) receive minimal mainstream media attention, which hinders commercial growth and makes it difficult to attract sponsors, fans, or consistent youth engagement." (CfE)***

Addressing this issue is critical to sustaining momentum and ensuring that major events translate into long-term growth. The NBA is now set to return to London in January 2026 with a landmark game between the Memphis Grizzlies and Orlando Magic at The O2. Securing these events remains of value. In particular, to not only maintaining London's global sport status, but to inspiring young people, fostering local pride, and embedding basketball more deeply into London's multicultural sporting landscape.

5 (Sport England, 2021; Sport England, 2024)

The city's basketball communities are already deeply aware of the value, power and impact of the sport to deliver individual and community benefits above and beyond participation. Community members frequently expressed how the sport's accessibility—minimal equipment, informal play spaces, diverse social and club opportunities, and cultural resonance with music, fashion, and digital/social media - make it uniquely positioned to engage urban youth and wider London communities.

However, there remains concern that the sport's popularity, social and cultural resonance, and historical legacies are not being better recognised by media, and that there is significant potential with the use of new media forms (e.g. social media and crowd-funding apps) to provide new opportunities for the sport's growth and celebration.

***There is also increasing visibility through social media, livestreams, and professional club engagement, helping raise the sport's profile." (CfE)***

There is a notable resource of talent and story-telling capacity that may be leveraged to show the sport's pronounced place in the city. Here, the profiles of the sport's successful professional athletes such as Luol Deng (the most successful British player in history), Shanice Beckford-Norton, Temi Fagbenle, and Paralympians Gaz Choudry, Simon Brown and Amy Conroy could be leveraged to demonstrate local city stories and also engage wider audiences, in particular schools, youth groups and community clubs ahead of elite fixtures.

This approach may also work in conjunction with national governing body partnerships with league or event operators to enhance ticketing strategies that further entice schools, families and wider club supporters to attend events.

Consequently, strategic media engagement and target content development by the community and/or the sport's local ambassadors and leaders may be able to unlock new avenues for sponsorship, investment, and infrastructure development. Enhanced media coverage may also better strengthen stakeholder relationships, and better position basketball communities to articulate compelling stories, demonstrate impact, and attract cross-sector partnerships.

In doing so, media becomes not just a promotional tool, but a cornerstone of sustainable growth, equity-driven policy, and long-term strategic planning.

In conclusion, major basketball events in London have delivered substantial economic, cultural, and social benefits. Yet, it is important to acknowledge emerging competing markets and to explore a wider range of spectator events to maintain relevance. With coordinated leadership, targeted investment, and community integration, London can reaffirm its status as a global basketball destination and hub.





## SECTION 3

# INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

Current Landscape, Strategic Challenges, and Development Opportunities for Basketball in London

### 3.1 Introduction

London offers a wide array of basketball spaces, ranging from public outdoor courts to school gyms, leisure centres, and private venues. The capital hosts approximately 759 free-to-use outdoor courts (including full-court, half-size, hoop-only or multi-use sport area in nature), many of which serve as vital hubs for informal play and community engagement. These are complemented by shared-use facilities in schools, community halls, and corporate social spaces. However, the quality, accessibility, and basketball-specific design of these venues vary significantly.

Notably, nearly a half (48.3%) of basketball community respondents rated facilities as “poor” or “very poor”, while only 19% rated current facilities either “good” or “excellent”. This is a red flag for equity in access, particularly in underserved boroughs where there may be less investment available for these facilities.

This sentiment reflects broader concerns about uneven distribution and underinvestment in basketball infrastructure relative to other sports. As one parent noted,

***“As a mother to two boys who love basketball, I often feel disappointed by the lack of indoor and outdoor facilities in the Richmond borough compared to tennis, football etc. It is such an inclusive and social sport—better facilities would give so many young people something to do, particularly teenagers.” (CfE)***

Yet, the sheer scope of work also presents opportunities -particularly for targeted investment that could shift perceptions and unlock greater community participation, especially among youth and casual players. Beyond standard court upgrades, engagement with governing bodies, clubs, families and players highlighted persistent issues around public transport and venue accessibility for disabled individuals. These challenges, common across London and nationally, directly affect everyday experiences and reinforce barriers to participation.

More than 70% of community survey respondents called for investment in high-quality, accessible facilities, more grassroots and community-led programmes, and a stronger focus on inclusivity and diversity. With coordinated leadership and targeted funding, London has an opportunity to turn its infrastructure from a bottleneck into a foundation for growth.

### 3.2 Current Challenges

Infrastructure is widely recognised as the primary barrier to basketball's growth in London. Clubs and teams consistently struggle to secure affordable, consistent, and reliable access to indoor courts.

***"Court availability is a major bottleneck—many teams struggle to find consistent, affordable indoor spaces. Schools and community centres often lack proper basketball infrastructure, leading to scheduling conflicts and limited training time." (CfE)***

***"Lack of facility access, lack of better and more outdoor and indoor courts, indoor courts are also very pricey to train in for when it is cold outside." (Community Survey)***

Cursory assessments by Hoopsfix Foundation and the GLA suggest more 80% of London courts are in states of disrepair. This constraint affects both grassroots participation and elite development. There is a consensus among basketball community members too that various forms of court development and investment are urgently needed. For example, among survey respondents 25.57% have a clear preference for more and improved indoor courts signals a critical infrastructure gap, and 21.76% are in favour of enhanced outdoor courts. As is well-established, indoor facilities are essential for year-round play, structured training, and hosting formal competitions, while outdoor spaces are vital for youth and community engagement, offering low-barrier entry points for casual play, social interaction, and local identity-building.

Beyond physical spaces, affordability remains a critical barrier. Booking fees for indoor courts can reach up to £80 per hour, making regular training and competition prohibitively expensive for many community clubs. This financial constraint is compounded by seasonal limitations, with school gyms often closed during holidays.

***"One of the most pressing issues is access to affordable, quality facilities. Basketball courts, especially indoor ones, are limited and often prioritised for other sports. Where access exists, booking fees can be prohibitively expensive for community clubs or informal players." (CfE)***

***"Facilities and access to facilities is difficult due to schools not opening and/or the cost to hire. Outdoor facilities need improving to attract more players." (Community Survey)***

***"Living in Richmond and having a teenage boy attending Christs School and joining Knights basketball team has been incredible for us... The downside is nowhere to practice outside of term time when the schools close their gyms." (CfE)***

Safety and design flaws further undermine facility quality, with noted concerns by users in relation to poor design and layout decisions. Of community survey respondents, 8.97% cited the need to prioritise enhanced spectator areas and 8.02% highlighted the importance of better lighting. These improvements contribute to the event experience, public safety, and may be considered vital to encouraging greater levels of community attendance.



Lighting, in particular, extends usable hours and improves safety, and may be considered a key influence upon increased participation.

Relatedly, there was also notable recognition among respondents (11.64% support) that infrastructure upgrades also needed to attend to wider equipment provision, accessibility and inclusive design aspects. The issues of inclusive design are particularly significant in relation to the substantial number of the population living with physical disabilities, and the specific physical nature of sport participation that necessitates changes to spaces to achieve equitable spectating, access and performance experiences. One priority issue cited by community members, for example, is the consideration of appropriate hoop heights for younger players and wheelchair basketball-users. Here, universal design principles have established benchmarks for accessibility for sports facilities (e.g., wheelchair compatible hoops, ramps, adaptive balls, appropriate court surfaces, changing/training facilities, as well as game-design, coaching and rule adaptations). Such practices are championed by British Wheelchair Basketball and London teams such as the Titans, who – alongside peers, may serve as appropriate leaders to facilitate and champion city-wide inclusive practices within the sport.

The specific call for better equipment (noted by 18.32% of respondents) underscores a need for functional, safe, and inclusive playing environments. Poor equipment can deter participation and diminish the quality of experience. These elements are central to inclusive community engagement, particularly for wheelchair users, younger children, and those interested in alternative formats like 3x3. These issues are also compounded by related challenges experienced by facility providers. For example, space constraints that limit the ability to secure sports wheelchairs, the lack of staff trained (and resources available to train staff) in adaptive and disability sport coaching, and general entrenched organisational risk-aversion and insurance anxieties that may hinder investment and/or prioritisation of accessibility (and related wheelchair/disability) sport. Cumulatively, such issues highlight the need for basketball-informed planning and inclusive design standards, but yet also open up the possibility to consider opportunities for cross-sector partnerships (e.g., with clubs, leisure providers, disability-sport focused universities, inclusive designers) to pilot programmes on facility-based inclusive strategies and public-engagement and awareness campaigns to catalyse change.

Moreover, access to indoor courts becomes increasingly limited once individuals leave formal education. Subsequently, this gap in provision stifles lifelong engagement and informal participation.

*"It's quite hard to find indoor basketball sessions unless you're part of a team or still in education. Once you leave school or university, access to indoor courts*

*becomes a lot more limited... If I want to go practice by myself indoors, it doesn't make sense to book a whole sports hall—but as it stands, this is basically the only way to do so." (CfE)*

*"Facilities aren't great and marketing for talent or specifically young talent isn't near enough." (Community Survey)*



### 3.3 Opportunities for Strategic Development

There are already positive improvements to, and expansion of, London's basketball infrastructure. Recent refurbishment models—such as those at Clapham Common (£55,000 project cost) and Hendon Park (£8,000)—demonstrate the impact of collaborative, community-led development. These projects, supported by partners including Footlocker, NBA, Sport England, and Basketball England, have delivered high-quality courts with free access, fostering physical activity, mental wellbeing, and pro-social networks. Further to these efforts, there is consistent reiteration from public stakeholders who advocate for renovating existing courts.

***"It would be great to renovate existing courts which have fallen into disrepair—have good quality hoops, proper markings and well-drained, even playing surfaces. It would also be great to add hoops to existing MUGAs in some instances and to provide indoor courts for winter/wet weather." (CfE)***

***"Most players may play outdoors in their local park due to availability and easy access however rims and backboards affect the play style of outdoor players. For example double rims or triple rims make it way harder for a new or regular basketball player to play the sport. Furthermore, there should be lighting installed in local basketball courts at parks so hoopers can be able to play late or play early in the morning whilst it is dark. Water fountains should also be installed next to courts especially when hoopers play in summer." (Community Survey)***

Given the known prohibitive costs of accessing indoor facilities, it is important to prioritise free and accessible play opportunities across the city. This may include existing court upgrades, new facility development, as well introducing weather-proofing solutions. Such upgrades would not only improve safety and usability but may also help extend seasonal access and support year-round engagement. Further scoping and innovation is needed to develop digital solutions that enable court usage tracking without creating unnecessary barriers. Equally, further collaboration with local authorities is needed to ensure safety and upkeep.



To note, as part of its Covid-19 Sector Renewal Fund, Sport England has already allocated £240,000 (distributed by Basketball England) to be targeted at clubs and communities in need of help in recovering from the negative impact of the pandemic.

<sup>6</sup> This includes £60,000 to improve 20 basketball courts across England, including the reflooring of The Regal in Lambeth. These investments align with Basketball England's mission to foster inclusive participation and

community development. However, more sustained and strategic funding is needed to scale these efforts across London. The UK Government's recent announcement in September 2025 of a £10 million partnership with the NBA to expand grassroots basketball participation to under-represented demographics and invest in basketball-led multi-sport facilities across England is a significant step towards this end.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> [basketball-england-annual-report-2023-24-160725155047.pdf](https://www.basketball-england.org/annual-report-2023-24-160725155047.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [NBA and UK Government announce comprehensive plan to elevate basketball in the UK - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nba-and-uk-government-announce-comprehensive-plan-to-elevate-basketball-in-the-uk)

### 3.4 Development Models and Best Practice

London's most successful infrastructure projects have emerged from multi-stakeholder partnerships. The Clapham Common refurbishment, led by the Hoopsfix Foundation, exemplifies how grassroots leadership, corporate sponsorship, and public sector support can converge to deliver high-impact outcomes. Similarly, Hendon Park's renovation—funded by Wilson and Basketball England—demonstrates how modest investments can yield significant community benefits.

These models are scalable. Hoopsfix's open-source refurbishment guides provide a blueprint for other boroughs, while evaluations of completed projects highlight the importance of strategic location, inclusive design, and ongoing maintenance. Courts near schools, leisure and/or youth centres, and community hubs, maintained as safe and welcoming spaces, are particularly effective in encouraging youth engagement and positive physical activity behaviours.

Respondents also propose joint ventures with other sports (such as netball and volleyball) to develop cost-effective, multi-sport infrastructure. However, as raised by several key basketball stakeholders, multipurpose halls can dilute basketball quality, due to competition for access, poor/insufficient line markings and equipment.

***"The facilities such as indoor courts always being rented out for different sports such as badminton so that players cannot develop in the indoor environment and also outdoor courts always being low quality in either having no nets, double rims and messed up backboards." (Community Survey)***

***"There seem to be lots of tennis courts around but very few basketball specific courts. MUGAs are ok but not great for basketball. The new (ish) basketball court in Burgess Park is excellent and suitable for wheelchair basketball." (Community Survey)***

Yet, done considerately, shared investment models may offer a pragmatic route to expanding capacity.



### 3.5 Borough-Level and Regional Infrastructure

To address geographic disparities, several stakeholders have proposed the potential development (or targeted refurbishment) of at least one high-quality, community-oriented basketball court per borough. These courts, as potential joint-venture models with Local Borough Authorities, would serve as local hubs for training, competition, and social engagement. Funding could be secured through developer contributions and Section 106 agreements, aligning infrastructure development with broader urban planning goals.

Borough basketball hubs—with multiple courts, gym areas, and administrative offices—are also viewed as essential to the sport's growth. Such centres would support talent development, event hosting, and organisational capacity. Repurposing underused urban spaces—such as car parks and railway arches—offers creative opportunities for regeneration, drawing inspiration from models in Paris, Melbourne, and Chicago. As respondents have noted,

***"Not enough basketball facilities and outdoor courts spread evenly across London...If there were more quality facilities available, it would provide a hub for the youth to go, provide more jobs, but also grow the sport and quality to put London and the UK on the world map for basketball." (CfE)***

***"More basketball facilities for young people in youth setting, free of charge." (Community Survey)***

***"More recreational basketball for children and young people." (Community Survey)***

Inclusive design must be central to all new developments. Courts should accommodate women, girls, players with disabilities, and young players in a variety of ways, and ensure venues appropriately meet the needs of all Londoners. This includes access and safety considerations, consideration of wheelchair-users, opportunities for religious scheduling, and gender-sensitive programming. Examples developed in other sports include individual and prioritised gender-based sessions, improving lighting and safeguarding practices (e.g., minimum clothing standards in changing rooms), altering changing room and event space design to improve accessibility, developing spaces for families and neurodiverse participants and fans.



***"More support for the disability students and improved facilities. (Community Survey)***

***"I install basketball courts and I was unable to make it suitable for wheelchair basketball and wheelchair football because there are no suitable combined hoops/goals... Someone needs to design a cantilever hoop that can be set back near the fencing and not interfere with the run off, and allow space for a goal for wheelchair football." (Community Survey)***

Issues related to cultural awareness have also been illustrated by the sport's professional athletes. As Rehana Khalil, the only athlete to have represented a Great Britain basketball team while wearing a hijab noted,

***"If I think of basketball in England, there isn't anybody else that I've seen who's from a South Asian background, is Pakistani, is Muslim and wears a hijab... "I do have to say to the officials that I don't do contact with males, and some of them kind of look at me funny, but they just don't understand it.""***<sup>8</sup>

Beyond this, the recent campaign to challenge anti-sport culture and urban regulations, in particular by challenging 'no-ball games' street games with the reintroduction of basketball hoops exemplifies for possibilities for change. In London alone, the campaign (involving both London Sport and the London Lions) has led to removal of over 7,000 such signs that have been replaced with more welcoming advertisements – 'MORE ball games at any time'. As reported by London sport, the original signs discouraged in excess of half a million children from community sport opportunities.<sup>9</sup>

Basketball infrastructure in London is at an important juncture. While the city boasts a passionate player base and a growing cultural footprint, its facilities remain fragmented, underfunded, and inconsistently maintained. Strategic investment in refurbishment, new builds, and inclusive design, guided by community-led models and supported by multi-sector partnerships (as is being evidenced in some London areas and further afield).

8 Nayar, E. (2024) *Rehana Khalil: The GB basketball player who wears a hijab*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/basketball/68825479> (Accessed: 8/7/25)

9 BBC (2025) *'No ball games' signs replaced with basketball hoops in London*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/articles/cdxqdgqx66xo> (Accessed: 18/8/25)



## SECTION 4

# PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

Building Sustainable Pathways  
for Basketball Talent, Coaching,  
and Sector Development in London



## 4.1 Introduction

Basketball in London is driven by passion, community commitment, and a growing pool of talent. Yet the workforce supporting the sport - from players and coaches to referees, administrators, and volunteers - faces systemic challenges that limit scalability, sustainability, and long-term career development. Despite pockets of excellence, the sector remains underfunded and overly reliant on unpaid and casual labour. As one stakeholder observed,

***"It feels like the sport isn't taken seriously enough. There's not enough funding, the facilities are often outdated or hard to access, and once players finish school or college, it's really hard to see a clear path forward unless they go abroad." (CfE)***

These sentiments are also reflected among other response from the basketball community, with 19.9% of survey respondents perceiving career opportunities as "Good" and 41.1% as "Average". Relatedly, a combined 34.4% rated opportunities as "Poor" (25.8%) or "Very Poor" (3.6%). Notwithstanding the reach and impact of current initiatives, these varied findings potentially suggest that while some community members have access to meaningful basketball experiences, others encounter barriers in terms of access, affordability, visibility, or program quality. Additionally, there may be further geographic or socioeconomic disparities in provision, where certain boroughs or communities may benefit from stronger programming while others remain underserved.

As noted below, there is a clear desire within the basketball community for more visible and structured career pathways in the sport, including coaching, refereeing, club and facility management, volunteers, and disability/inclusive sport advocates.

***"I would like to see more availability for education through basketball, and more opportunities within the corporate side of basketball." (Community Survey)***

***"[I would like to see opportunities] Improved and hopefully treated similarly to football (in the aspect of being a valid option for career instead of just a wavering dream)." (Community Survey)***

This section consequently outlines the current landscape of basketball workforce development in London, identifies key barriers to progression, and proposes strategic interventions to build a more professional, inclusive, and future-ready sector.





## 4.2 Current Workforce Landscape

London's basketball workforce is diverse but unevenly supported. Clubs, schools, and community programmes rely heavily on volunteers, many of whom are deeply committed but lack formal training or long-term support. This dependency undermines programme continuity and restricts the sector's ability to retain talent and deliver high-quality experiences. As respondents noted, there is a strong desire for wide-ranging professional development improvements.

***"Many clubs and community initiatives rely heavily on passionate volunteers. While commendable, this limits scalability and consistency. Without professionalised structures, burnout and turnover are common." (CfE)***

***"More coach education opportunities, pathways into employment with clubs, community groups and governing bodies." (Community Survey)***

***"More outreach for coaches development. More exposure for players and the sport." (Community Survey)***

The coaching pipeline constraints are particularly cited. While Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications are more available, there is a shortage of coaches with higher-level certifications (Level 3 and above), particularly in underserved boroughs. While the recent London Coaches Program (mentioned below and elsewhere in this report) is addressing some of these issues, progression challenges remain.

***"Long-term funding—through sponsorship, public grants, or private partnerships—is essential to reduce reliance on volunteers and support paid coaching roles. The sector also needs more qualified coaches, particularly at higher certification levels, to support player development." (CfE)***

As reflected by some basketball community respondents, there is also an invariable issue here that targeting or engaging older cohorts is not necessarily a priority for workforce development. Only 16.98% of community respondents suggested that the 26-60-year-old category are the group most in need of development. This may be a function of a strong interest in youth development prevailing in the sport. It also suggests adult development may be under-utilised or given lower priority, and thus an opportunity is being potentially missed in terms of broadening supporting life-long-learning, that could be used to enhance recreational leagues, family-based programming, or intergenerational sport models.

Referees, table officials and administrator/managers face similar challenges. While initiatives like the London Basketball Association Coaching Pathway (LBACP) and referee/table courses offer entry points, retention and progression remain limited.

### 4.3 Player Pathways and Career Development

In terms of athlete pathways, London has a strong record of producing elite basketball talent. The City of London Academy in Southwark, Barking Abbey, and the Richmond Knights consistently have produced the most talent in the capital, and further clubs such as London Lions, London Elite, Newham Youngbloods, and Brixton Topcats have continued to develop players who progress to US colleges, European leagues, and national teams. In addition, there has been considerable progress made with British Wheelchair Basketball's transformative Talent Pathway programme. Beyond supporting professional playing opportunities, the programme is structured to provide clear trajectories through national athlete development tiers that include the Aspire, England Talent Programme, England Development Programme and Diploma in Sporting Excellence (a national vocational qualification focused on technical and tactical skills and competencies as well as personal, professional and holistic development).<sup>10</sup> Currently, athletes from London Titans, East London Phoenix and wider basketball clubs are feeding into the programme, and clearer routes are being created that provide not only development pathways in the sport, but beyond into sport coaching, sports science, sports management and the wider sport-sector. Nonetheless, domestic opportunities for progression are limited, with few professional contracts available and minimal integration between junior and senior systems.

There remains opportunities to build capacity with these established programmes and ensure that pathways beyond youth level become more visible and less fragmented.

***"Another strength would be the presence of elite development pathways with clubs consistently producing players who progress to US colleges, European leagues and national teams. Junior National League structures and regional performance programmes also provide pathways for talented young players to progress." (CfE)***

***"Just like how the other European countries are and how they have lots of development programs and many options to send their talent to such as Euroleague or the NBA, I want England to be like that." (Community Survey)***

***"The pathway beyond youth level remains fragmented, with few domestic opportunities for progression, leading to talent dropout." (CfE)***

Relatedly, there is also strong recognition among community respondents that adolescents are the most vital cohort to engage, support and retain to strengthen the sports development. 35.19% of survey respondents perceived that the 11-18-year-old-cohort were the most important from a development perspective; essentially being at a critical point at young people transition from casual play to structured competition, forge strong identities, and develop skill specialisation.

<sup>10</sup> [Pathways - British Wheelchair Basketball](#)

This issue is particularly acute between the ages of 16 and 20, when many young athletes disengage due to lack of clear options, or the pursuit of other sport, academic or employment options that offer other opportunities, experiences, skill development and financial remuneration.

Without visible and accessible career routes, London risks losing talented individuals to other sports or sectors.

***“Retention of young athletes, especially between ages 16 and 20, is a pressing issue, with limited professional or academic pathways available within the UK system.” (CfE)***

In addition, schools and Physical Education (P.E) have long been mainstays of basketball development, especially in relation to early years introductions to sport. Yet, in recent decades sport provision and P.E hours have also experienced decline due to curricula redevelopments and austerity measures effecting provision and financial support for school sport and after-school clubs/activities, as well as broader social and cultural shifts among younger generations.

Reflecting this, as often the first point of contact for young players, early-age programmes were noted as a factor for increasing basketball participation and are a critical area for long-term pipeline development. Further to this broader context, younger people continue to face selection biases that favour early-maturing players and/or those with the means, motive and resource to engage in development opportunities.

Financial barriers also compound these challenges. While there are efforts to tackle these issues within clubs and programmes such as Go! London, club membership fees, facility hire costs, and licensing charges are increasingly unaffordable.

These costs disproportionately affect low-income families and reduce access to structured development.

***“Entering a club is expensive for most, especially at local level—high rent charged by schools who use facilities management intermediaries to boost revenues. England Basketball licensing is extortionate for non-UK players and price increases are beyond inflation year on year.” (CfE)***





#### 4.4 Organisational Fragmentation and Sector Coordination

London's club structure and community programmes remain the life-blood and mainstay of professional development and talent pathways within the sport. Yet, these occur under the umbrella of national organisational frameworks and top-down resource provision. One of the most persistent issues raised across the stakeholder spectrum in this regard were the structural challenges and fragmented nature of the sports' governance and delivery systems. Despite the sports' growing popularity and cultural relevance, there remains a lack of cohesion between key organisations—namely Basketball England, the former BBL, the British Basketball Federation (BBF), Sport England, and local authorities.

The ongoing disputes between the British Basketball Federation and Super League Basketball over the course of 2024-2025 have, in particular, served to generate concern among basketball enthusiasts keen to participate, spectate and enjoy the game at the professional level.<sup>11</sup> This disjointed landscape results in missed opportunities for strategic investment in talent identification, professional career progression and wider workforce development.

Stakeholders consistently highlight the lack of coordination across basketball organisations.

Governance structures are perceived as disjointed, with limited collaboration between national bodies, regional leagues, and grassroots clubs and initiatives. Specifically, there has been repeated frustration expressed with the absence of a unified framework and clear strategic direction for the delivery of grassroots and lower league aspects of the sport. As respondents have variously noted,

***“Even the way the sport is managed feels messy, with different organisations not really working together. It’s frustrating, because the passion is definitely here—what’s missing is the proper support and structure to help basketball grow and thrive in the city.” (CfE)***

This sentiment reflects a broader reflection that while grassroots energy and elite ambition exist, they are not being harnessed through coordinated planning or shared strategic goals. Irrespective of overarching challenges, many basketball community members in London feel there is a valuable opportunity to strengthen alignment between national bodies, regional leagues, and grassroots clubs and initiatives. There is a growing appetite for a clearer, more unified local strategic direction that would help the sport build on its existing strengths and realise its full potential across the capital.

11 BBC (2025) *British basketball divided over new league plan*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/basketball/articles/cvgekr51eljo> (Accessed: 24/6/25); Hughes, M. (2025) *Sports minister asks questions about British Basketball's deal*. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2025/apr/02/sport-minister-seeks-inquiry-over-british-basketball-us-deal-men-league> (Accessed: 18/6/25); Hughes, M. (2025) *Hoop dreams in peril as British basketball's crisis reaches boiling point*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2025/feb/16/hoop-dreams-in-peril-as-british-basketballs-crisis-reaches-boiling-point> (Accessed: 18/6/25)

## 4.5 Workforce Development Models and Best Practice

Despite systemic challenges, several programmes offer promising models for workforce development in London. Beyond previously mentioned programmes, initiatives such as the London Lions Foundation, Reach & Teach, and Ball Out UK also contribute to workforce development by integrating coaching, mentoring, and leadership training into their programmes. These organisations often work in underserved communities, using basketball as a tool for social mobility and civic engagement. However, scalability remains a concern. Most programmes operate on limited budgets and rely heavily on volunteer labour. As one stakeholder noted,

***“Many clubs and community initiatives rely heavily on passionate volunteers. While commendable, this limits scalability and consistency. Without professionalised structures, burnout and turnover are common.” (CfE)***

Moreover, respondents advocated for investment in supporting wider organisational roles—including marketing, communications, officiating, administration, and event management—as essential components of a thriving basketball ecosystem. Addressing these areas is not only vital for professionalising community-level basketball but also for enhancing its appeal, retention, and impact across diverse communities. Referee and table official courses within some local clubs have expanded entry-level access and improved officiating standards.

A small selection of clubs in the city also provide opportunities for participants related to media/social media training, marketing, event/game-day volunteering and basic performance analysis.

A significant proportion of community survey respondents (19.4%) identified the need to prioritise career opportunities and pathways for grassroots engagement professionals and volunteers, those working directly with young people and communities. Additionally, 25.95% of respondents underscored the importance of developing new coaches and robust coach education programmes, signalling a clear demand for structured support mechanisms that enable progression from entry-level involvement to professional roles. These programmes are particularly effective when embedded within club ecosystems, allowing participants to gain practical experience and mentorship. Nonetheless, progression beyond entry-level remains limited, and there is a need for more advanced training and clearer career pathways.

Challenges notwithstanding, there are shared sentiments across London’s basketball community that long-term funding, potentially through sponsorship, public grants, or private partnerships, is essential to professionalise the sector and support paid roles across coaching, officiating, administration, and event management. Partnerships with corporate sponsors—such as Footlocker, the Nike group, and Red Bull—also present leverage opportunities.

## 4.6 Strategic Opportunities

To build a sustainable basketball workforce in London three core areas emerge as areas of potential priority: professionalisation, retention, and inclusion.

**Professionalisation:** Establishing paid coaching roles at club and regional levels is essential. This includes training new coaches, expanding access to higher-level qualifications (Level 3 and above), creating career pathways in officiating, administration, and sport science, and embedding workforce development into strategic planning. As one respondent emphasised, highlighting the latent talent within the sector and the need for structured support to help it flourish.

*"Next is good people that know what they're doing and want to make the sport better. The good news is you have those people already, and now just need to develop more of them. Things like the LBACP and the ref and table courses are great. There just needs to be more beyond that." (CfE)*

**Retention:** The lack of clear progression routes within the UK system has been repeatedly cited. Therefore, addressing the dropout rate among young athletes is critical, particularly between ages 16 and 20. This requires expanding domestic playing opportunities, integrating academic and vocational pathways, and improving transition support between youth and senior levels. Consequently, investment in semi-professional leagues, scholarship programmes, and dual-career models could help bridge this gap.

*"Retention of young athletes, especially between ages 16 and 20, is a pressing issue, with limited professional or academic pathways available within the UK system." (CfE)*

**Inclusion:** Workforce development programmes must be accessible to women, individuals with disabilities, and culturally diverse communities. This includes embedding inclusive practices into recruitment, training, and programme design. Community-led organisations already demonstrate best practice in this area. However, these foundational organisations require greater support to scale their impact. For example, 'Reach & Teach' has developed culturally responsive coaching models that resonate with young people from diverse backgrounds, while Ball Out UK integrates leadership development into its summer tournaments.

These interventions must be supported by robust data collection and evaluation. Mapping the current workforce, tracking progression, and identifying gaps will enable targeted investment and continuous improvement. In this task, collaboration between Basketball England, Sport England, the GLA, and borough-level authorities appears valuable to ensure alignment and accountability.



A young person in a wheelchair is shown in the middle of a basketball shot. They are wearing a black hoodie and a black headband. The basketball is orange and is suspended in the air above their outstretched hand. The background is a dark, out-of-focus image of a basketball court with white lines. The overall tone is energetic and focused.

## **SECTION 5**

# **YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN LONDON BASKETBALL**

Strengthening basketball for London  
youth and wider communities

## 5.1 Overview of Current Provision

Basketball in London enjoys a vibrant and deeply rooted grassroots presence, with substantial participation levels among young people across the city's boroughs. This paradox of rising interest but constrained infrastructure defines much of the current landscape. As one respondent noted,

***"Basketball is one of London's most popular and diverse sports, particularly among young people. Yet while participation continues to grow, the development of sustainable community and youth programmes faces several obstacles." (CfE)***

The strength of London's basketball ecosystem lies in its community-driven ethos. This is particularly evident in the proliferation of summer leagues, pop-up tournaments, and borough-level competitions.

***"The strength of basketball in the UK is its grassroots community," (CfE)***

***"...basketball is a very big and strong community throughout London. There are many events that occur through the summer as well as summer leagues and well-run leagues throughout the season." (CfE)***

These activities reflect both the sport's cultural relevance and its capacity to engage diverse youth populations. However, currently basketball community members have expressed a cautiously critical view of current grassroots development efforts. While 40% of respondents acknowledged community programmes and initiatives as "somewhat effective," which indicates moderate endorsement and suggests room for improvement. 32.6% expressed neutrality, indicating either uncertainty or limited awareness of existing programmes. This ambiguity may stem from communication gaps, where stakeholders are either uninformed or unclear about the scope and impact of development initiatives.

More concerning is the 19.3% of respondents who rated efforts as "ineffective", reflecting unmet expectations—particularly in underserved communities or among those seeking clearer career pathways. Only 8.1% viewed current efforts as "very effective," underscoring a lack of confidence in high-impact delivery. These findings point to a pressing need for greater visibility, stronger leadership, and scalable best practices.





## 5.2 Case Studies and Exemplars

Several organisations exemplify best practice in youth engagement and community development. The London Basketball Association (LBA), for instance, has become a cornerstone of grassroots provision. Its inclusive programming, outreach efforts, and emphasis on fun and accessibility have made it a model for community-led sport. As one participant shared,

***“Loads of young people are getting into it, especially in diverse communities, and you can really feel the love for the game growing. Grassroots programmes like the LBA are doing an incredible job making basketball accessible and fun.” (CfE)***

Greenhouse Sports has also previously played a pivotal role, using basketball as a vehicle for social change. Its STEP (Social, Thinking, Emotional, Physical) framework supports holistic youth development, while its targeted programmes such as the Girls Basketball Development Hub and Foundation Basketball promote gender equity and early engagement. With over 4,000 registered participants annually and 1,200 attending weekly sessions, Greenhouse Sports demonstrates how sport can foster consistent engagement and build lifelong habits. Its emphasis on safe spaces and SEND inclusion further reinforces its commitment to equity.

London Ball Out 3x3 Tour – a charity-led ventured undertaken in partnership with JD Sports, Basketball England, Subway and Northeast trophies has further expanded access, and exists as part of a global network of 3x3 tournaments. With six qualifying events and two days of finals in London, the Tour has reached over 142,000 participants, 44% of whom are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. These events combine competitive play with cultural relevance, leveraging the urban appeal and Olympic status of 3x3 basketball. As one stakeholder noted,

***“3x3 basketball is ideal for pop-up events in public spaces, parks, and high streets, engaging new audiences.” (CfE)***

The London Youth Games (LYG) and London Youth also contribute on a smaller scale to supporting the city’s basketball culture and widening participation. Underscoring the sport’s reach into underserved communities, 59% of basketball participants reside in the bottom 40% of the deprivation index (IMD 1–4), Open Inter-Borough Girls Basketball event saw over 60% ethnically diverse participation, while the boys’ competition engaged 59% Black participants—figures that reflect basketball’s unique role in promoting inclusion.



### 5.3 Social, Educational, and Equalities Connections

Basketball's potential as a tool for social development is increasingly recognised.<sup>12</sup> Programmes such as those run by Greenhouse Sports and London Youth integrate mentoring, education, and life skills into their delivery models. The use of sport to foster STEP competencies, promote mental health, and build confidence is particularly impactful in communities facing socioeconomic challenges. Basketball England's Youth Forum initiative has also been praised for widening representation and giving young people a voice in decision-making. This co-creation model, designing programmes with youth, not just for youth, is essential for long-term engagement and relevance.

***"Basketball England has been recognised for widening representation in leadership and giving young people a voice through initiatives such as Youth Forum." (CfE)***

Yet, systemic barriers persist. Disability stigma, financial exclusion, and perception gaps continue to hinder participation, particularly in marginalised communities. Facility access remains a dominant challenge, with leisure centres often prioritising more profitable sports. The absence of basketball from strategic planning documents, further illustrates the sport's marginalisation.

As one respondent lamented,

***"At least one/two basketball-dedicated indoor facilities per borough [are] needed." "Basketball is absent from this report and was not considered at all... I believe this to be a significant oversight compared to the focus and research on traditional sports like football, cricket, tennis, and rugby." (CfE)***

This opinion is reflected in further respondent data that has highlighted critical gaps in inclusivity and youth engagement. While basketball community members noted female participation (17.21%) and disability inclusion (5.46%) were acknowledged as meaningful development areas, their relatively low prioritisation suggests these areas remain under-recognised and under-resourced. This calls for tailored interventions, inclusive facility design, and visibility campaigns to ensure basketball is truly accessible to all. Similarly, 18.85% of respondents emphasised youth engagement as a cornerstone of development, linking it to broader outcomes in education, wellbeing, and social mobility. In contrast, coach education (9.84%) and ethnic/cultural diversity (8.2%) received the least attention. These areas represent high-potential levers for change, and strategic investment here could unlock a more representative, skilled, and resilient basketball workforce.

12 Romyn, M. (2022). 'For them it was just a game but for us it was more': Black Identity and the Making of Basketball in Urban Britain. In *History Workshop Journal* (Vol. 93, No. 1, pp. 69-94). Oxford University Press; Russell, C., Morgan, H., & Campbell, N. (2023). Developing the Basketball Community: Supporting Outdoor Basketball Courts Social and Community Interactions (UK). *International Journal of Basketball Studies*, 2(1), 9-24.

Cumulatively, there is a firm indication that club development must be at the heart of community basketball strategy. With 25.68% of respondents identifying it as the top priority, there is strong consensus that local clubs are the engine room of grassroots basketball. However, many clubs face persistent challenges in governance, funding, volunteer recruitment, and facility access. Without targeted support in these areas, the sector risks stagnation.

Strengthening club infrastructure is not just operational—it's foundational for talent identification, community cohesion, and long-term sustainability.





## 5.4 Partnership Working and Strategic Leverage

Collaborative partnerships are essential to scaling impact. Organisations such as Access Sport and Safe Haven Basketball Club have demonstrated how targeted community days and inclusive programming can build trust and engagement. These partnerships present potential models for future expansion among other clubs, and the creation of a framework of London clubs sharing values and long-term goals that guide city-wide development (potentially aligning with national federation and city-level sport strategies). Here, there is significant opportunities to deepen ties with local authority and corporate leisure providers, educational institutions, and local authorities. As one stakeholder suggested,

*“London could benefit greatly by forging deeper ties with organisations like GLL, educational institutions, and local authorities to unlock underused facilities and tap into new pools of volunteers and talent.” (CfE)*

These partnerships could unlock access to underutilised spaces, reduce costs, and support volunteer recruitment and retention. Local tournaments, skills challenges, and showcase games—delivered in partnership with schools, housing estates, and youth clubs—could also be better utilised to foster community pride and visibility. These events should be embedded within borough-level development plans and supported by multi-year funding models.

*“Local tournaments, skills challenges, and showcase games can be hosted in partnership with schools, housing estates, and youth clubs to build community pride and engagement.” (CfE)*





## 5.5 Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the passion and creativity within London's basketball scene, several structural challenges undermine sustainability. 19.4% of community respondents noted that youth and community-level career development pathways should be a focal point of basketball development. Yet, fragmented pathways mean that few young people transition from schoolyard play to clubs or elite programmes. Short-term engagement, via pop-ups or one-off events, risks disengagement without sustainability or capacity building planning. Funding models are often shallow and short-term, limiting strategic growth. As one respondent noted,

***"Many clubs rely heavily on volunteers... limits scalability and consistency." (CfE)***

To address these issues, there is strong suggestion from respondents among the basketball community that London needs to invest in borough-based community hubs that offer play, mentorship, and skills development, especially for women and girls. Reverse integration models, such as inclusive wheelchair basketball formats championed by the likes of the London Titans, London Phoenix, University of East London and British Wheelchair Basketball, can disrupt normative hierarchies and build empathy in school sport. Digital innovation also offers growth potential, with youth-oriented social platforms and apps echoing best practices from US franchises and that include the sport's most aspirational players. This kind of influencer-led engagement can also amplify reach and relevance.

***"Get a BBL player to local courts that's advertised through these UK bball influencers, schools and youth clubs and teach them the basics." (CfE)***

Basketball is one of London's most popular and culturally resonant sports, particularly among young people from diverse communities. Its grassroots strength is undeniable, with organisations such as the London Basketball Association (LBA), London Lions, London Thunder, Haringey Basketball Club, and London Youth Games driving inclusive participation and social development across boroughs. To capitalise upon this momentum, strategic investment is urgently needed.

There is a strong emphasis among the community that London is well-placed to establish a city-wide youth basketball framework, co-created with communities and supported by multi-year funding. Borough-based hubs, inclusive formats (e.g., 3x3 and wheelchair basketball), and digital engagement platforms can unlock new pathways for play, mentorship, and progression. With coordinated leadership and targeted partnerships, basketball can continue and strengthen its roles as a cornerstone of youth development and civic pride in London.



## SECTION 6

# STRATEGIC

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Coordinating policy, practice and investment for systemic growth

Recommendations	Challenge	Sub-Deliverables
1 Develop local, high-quality, basketball-focused spaces & facilities	Inadequate facility access, safety concerns, and lack of hosting capacity. 80-90% of all basketball facilities in disrepair and ad hoc upgrades often do not factor in actual need.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Develop/Upgrade existing outdoor court spaces as pilot initiatives across the city</li><li>2. Invest, lobby, and create partnerships to develop more indoor basketball courts.</li><li>3. Identify and secure stakeholder support and investment that contributes to sustainable mid-scale event and training facilities.</li><li>4. Implement a set of quality standards.</li></ol>
2 Build basketball workforce capacity	Limited training access and lack of peer support for coaches and volunteers. Need budget and resource to deliver meaningful progress. Talent is needed across the spectrum: volunteers, referees, coaches at different levels etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Expand Coach Education &amp; Mentorship Schemes.</li><li>2. Pilot Multi-Year Workforce Roles.</li><li>3. Create a Centralised Online Hub for Programme Leaders.</li></ol>
3 Improve Strategic Collaboration	Siloed efforts and lack of coherent planning across organisations.	
4 Grow engagement with basketball and amplify awareness of the sport	Limited public profile and desire to increase spectator engagement. Low visibility in diverse communities and underrepresentation in mainstream sport narratives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Host Mid-Scale Professional Events</li><li>2. Introduce Inclusive Marketing &amp; Outreach</li><li>3. Create a Mobile Basketball Activation Unit</li></ol>
5 Integrate Basketball into School Programmes and PE Pathways	Basketball’s marginalisation in formal education and limited visibility in school sport.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Develop collaborations within education providers that open up more spaces for participation.</li><li>2. Provide support for a programme of after-school basketball opportunities.</li><li>3. Explore, support and pilot formal basketball interventions that align with PE curricula structures.</li></ol>



	Recommendations	Challenge	Sub-Deliverables
6	Support Grassroots Clubs sustainability	Financial instability, volunteer burnout, and short-term programming.	<div>1. Capacity build clubs to enhance long-term sustainability.</div> <div>2. Facilitate more sustained and affordable access to facilities for clubs.</div>
7	Support Basketball Inclusion in Borough-Level urban development, sport and physical activity, and youth strategies	Systemic exclusion from local sport planning and redevelopment.	Facilitate shared learning across boroughs.
8	Explore feasibility of a London Basketball Data & Impact Observatory	Lack of consistent, city-wide data on participation, equity, and programme outcomes.	Policy (evidence-based planning), economic (ROI analysis), academic (research partnerships).
9	Harness Collaborative Youth Basketball Leadership Programmes	Lack of structured leadership pathways for young people in basketball.	<div>1. Explore opportunities for a focused London Youth Basketball Leadership programme.</div> <div>2. Work with partners establish holistic development approaches.</div>
10	Review existing talent pathway strategies	Fragmented progression routes and socioeconomic barriers to elite development.	Work with sector partners to explore options for improving coherence across existing talent pathway strategies



## SECTION 7

# MAYOR'S BASKETBALL TASKFORCE

Celebrating Basketball as London's Iconic Sport

## 7. Mayor's Basketball Taskforce for London

The Mayor's Basketball Taskforce was established in autumn 2024 following discussions between the Mayor of London and NBA Deputy Commissioner Mark Tatum. Its purpose is to grow the game of basketball across the capital.

This group brings together senior leaders from national and international basketball organisations, London-based institutions, and experts from sport, business, culture and government. Members share a common goal: to strengthen basketball's position in London and maximise the opportunities the sport can offer to the city and its communities.

**The Taskforce is guided by three core objectives:**

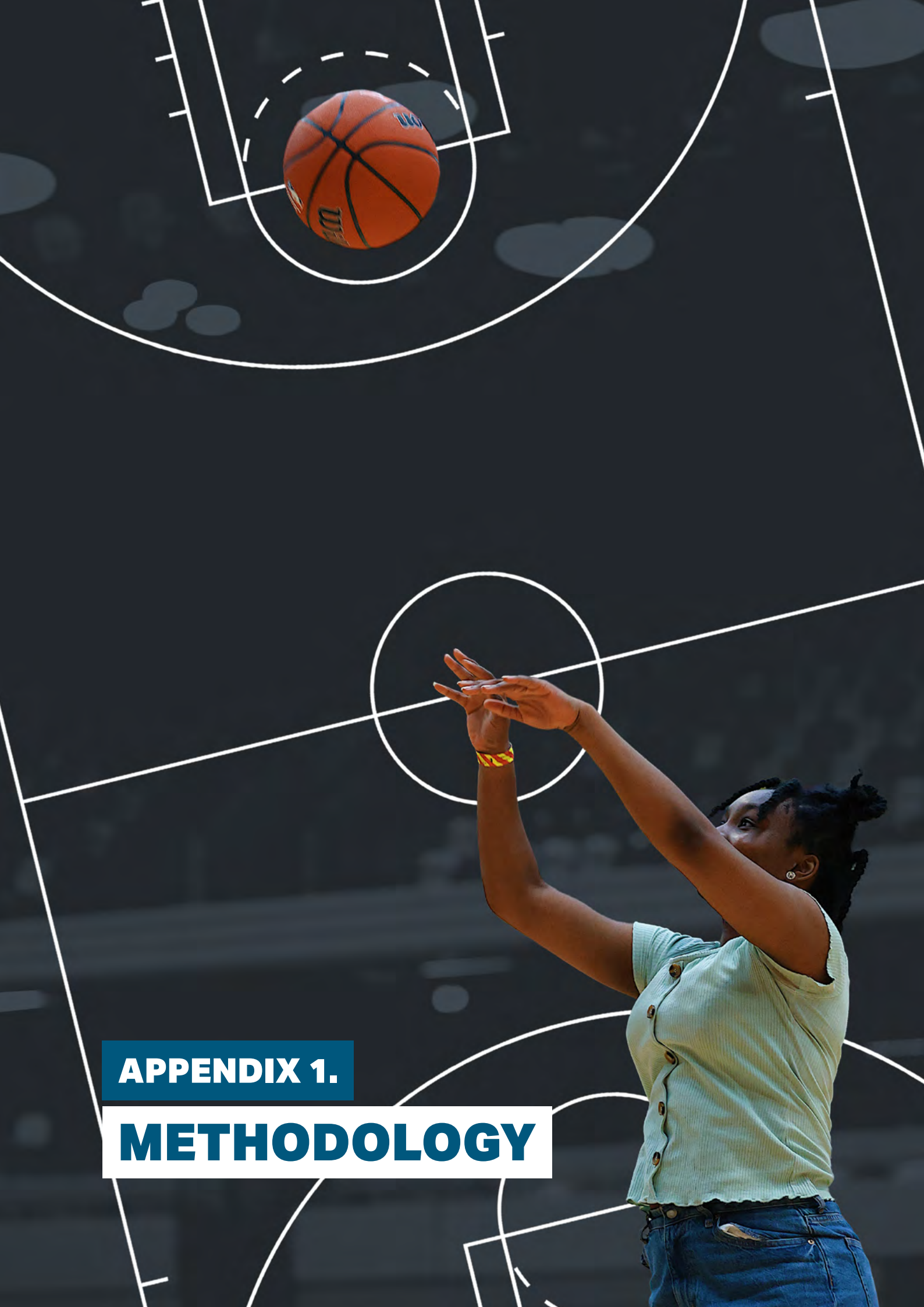
**Grow the game sustainably:** developing pathways for emerging talent, enhancing local infrastructure and promoting the sport's influence beyond the court—including its impact on fashion, lifestyle, and culture

**Attract world-class events,** from NBA games and FIBA competitions to emerging formats such as 3x3 basketball.

**Create positive opportunities for young Londoners** through grassroots activity that supports youth safety, employability, and wellbeing.

This report was commissioned by the Taskforce and developed in consultation with its members. It represents one of the first major outputs of the Taskforce's three-year programme and provides a shared evidence base for collaboration.





**APPENDIX 1.**

# **METHODOLOGY**

Multi-source evidence & engagement base

Documentary Analysis	Strategic plans, annual reports, and policy frameworks from Basketball England, Sport England, GLA, BBF, and BBL
Academic Exploration	Institutional, media, and academic sources integrated for additional context, critique and strategic alignment
Call-for-Evidence	487 responses across 30 boroughs; thematic coding of open-text submissions
Task Force Member Discussions	Sectoral insights from Taskforce members representing key stakeholder perspectives across the sector.
Community Survey	Mixed-methods design; borough-level variation and demographic mapping
Stakeholder Workshops	Cross-sector dialogue on governance, infrastructure, club development and youth engagement. Online and In-person.

Documentary & secondary source analysis

This report includes a comprehensive secondary source analysis to examine the state of basketball in London, situating its development within broader national sport and policy contexts. The methodology integrated document, archival, and media-based research to construct a critical, robust and multi-layered account of basketball’s institutional, cultural, and community dynamics.

Key sources included official publications from UK government departments, national sport agencies (e.g., Sport England, UK Sport, London Sport), and basketball-specific organisations such as Basketball England. These materials comprised strategic plans, annual reports, financial statements, and policy frameworks. These documents provided foundational insights into governance structures, funding mechanisms, and strategic priorities shaping basketball’s trajectory across London and the UK.

To complement these institutional perspectives, the analysis incorporated mainstream media coverage from online and print outlets including the BBC, The Guardian, The Independent, Evening Standard, London Metro, City FM, and borough-level newspapers. In order to ascertain the most recent media impressions, the collation of data focused on a relatively recent 12-month period (29th April 2024 to 31st May 2025). Sports commentary about the on-court/statistical performance of individual teams or matches, as well as USA (or more global) basketball-related stories, were not included in this research as these were deemed to be outside the remit and scope to understand the media’s broader portrayal of the sport in the UK and London specifically. The primary intention was to capture prevailing media sentiments that may play roles in shaping public discourse, community engagement, and the visibility of basketball within the city. Collected media narratives

were triangulated with policy documents to assess alignment, tensions, and gaps in representation and support.

Further empirical depth was achieved through the evaluation and inclusion of peer-reviewed academic literature, drawing from journals in Sport Management, Geography, Urban Studies, Sociology of Sport and Social Policy. These scholarly contributions enabled a theoretically informed understanding of basketball's development, particularly in relation to grassroots participation, urban regeneration, and equity in sport provision.

All sources were reviewed critically, with attention to provenance, scope, and analytical framing. This process facilitated the identification of key stakeholders—ranging from governing bodies and local authorities to community clubs and advocacy groups—and mapped areas of collaboration, contestation, and innovation within London's basketball ecosystem.

The triangulation of institutional, media, and academic sources has allowed for a nuanced and contextually grounded account of basketball in London. This methodology not only captures the structural and strategic dimensions of sport development but also foregrounds the lived realities and community-led initiatives that animate basketball's presence across the city. In addition, the scholarly literature, and key issues and themes within basketball-related critique, was used to inform the construction of the focus and question items for the subsequent Call-for-Evidence and community survey.

### Call-for-evidence

To complement the document-based analysis, the report incorporated a public Call for Evidence (CfE) designed to capture experiences, practitioner insights, and community perspectives on basketball across London. The CfE was open for seven weeks, from 11 June to 15 August 2025, and focused on four strategic taskforce themes: Major Events, Infrastructure & Facilities, Youth & Community Engagement, Professional Pathways.

The CfE was administered via the secure Alchemer software platform and underwent full internal GDPR and ethical compliance review by the Greater London Authority (GLA) prior to launch. Distribution was coordinated through GLA communications channels, social media outreach, and targeted engagement with basketball stakeholders, including taskforce members, clubs, and community leaders. Respondents were able to complete the CfE digitally, but where necessary/requested (e.g., in the instances of technological difficulty or impairment issues) questions and answers were able to be supplied via email. This ensured broad visibility and accessibility across London's basketball ecosystem.

Respondents (n=487) provided both structured and open-text responses. Demographic and profile data were collected to contextualise contributions, including organisational affiliation, basketball-related roles, and years of involvement in the sport. Representation spanned 30 of London's 32 boroughs (plus the City of London), with additional input from 13 UK counties (primarily



from Home Counties) highlighting regional interdependencies and shared challenges.

The CfE posed 15 open-ended questions aligned with the taskforce themes, inviting respondents to reflect on systemic barriers, opportunities for inclusive growth, facility access, workforce challenges, and programme innovation. Upon closure of the CfE, data were cleaned to remove incomplete, indecipherable, or duplicate entries. Qualitative responses were analysed inductively, allowing emergent themes to surface organically across the five domains. This thematic coding process identified areas of critical need, strategic opportunity, and potential leverage for investment and policy action.

Findings from the CfE were triangulated with parallel data sources—including taskforce discussions, stakeholder workshops, and community survey results—to ensure analytical coherence and depth. The CfE enriched the report by foregrounding grassroots voices, practitioner expertise, and community-led innovation, offering a more textured and inclusive account of basketball's current state and future potential in London.

### Community engagement Survey

To further enrich the evidence base for this report, a targeted Community-Level Survey was conducted to capture localised insights into basketball development across London. The survey ran from Monday 26 August to Friday 26 September 2025 and was designed to complement broader stakeholder engagement efforts, including the Public Call for Evidence and taskforce consultations.

The survey focused on four thematic domains central to London's basketball ecosystem: (1) Infrastructure & Facilities, (2) Events & Competition, (3) Career Development & Workforce, and (4) General Challenges and Opportunities. These areas reflect key priorities identified by the Mayor's Basketball Taskforce and align with strategic concerns across grassroots and professional pathways.

A mixed-methods design was employed, combining 15 Likert-scale items with 3 open-ended questions. This structure enabled both quantitative benchmarking and qualitative exploration of respondent perspectives. In addition to thematic content, the survey gathered basic demographic data, including age, gender, ethnicity, disability status, years connected to basketball, residential borough or location, and primary relationship to the sport (e.g., player, coach, volunteer, parent, administrator).

The survey was distributed via GLA digital channels, social media platforms, and through direct outreach to basketball clubs, community organisations, and local networks. This ensured broad accessibility and representation across London's diverse basketball communities.

Survey demographic highlights include:

218 respondents across a broad spectrum of the basketball community.
Approx. 24.2% under-18-year-olds; 14.4% 18–30-year-olds; 28% 31–40-year-olds; 19.7% 41–50-year-olds; 9.8% 51–60-year-olds; and 3.8% 60+ year-olds.
The predominant relationship with the sport represented was player/athlete (59.10%), following by coach (11.4%), fan/community member (9.10%), school/education representative (5.3%).
23.7% of respondents have been involved in the sport for more than 10 years, 27.5% for less-than 10 years, 28.2 are not involved in the sport but have plans to do so in the near future, and 28.2% do not have any current plans to be involved.
Although a 39.4% of respondents have more than 5 years involved in the game in London, a majority (60.6%) have less than 10 years specific involvement in London.

In terms of geographic representativeness, 28/32+1 boroughs were represented (excluding: Bexley, Havering, Hounslow, Richmond-upon-Thames). 4 responses referenced multiple boroughs, showing cross-borough service delivery. Several entries included non-standard or informal area names (e.g., “East London”, “West London”, “Canary Wharf”), suggesting broader regional engagement.

Upon closure, all responses were subject to a rigorous data cleaning process to remove incomplete, duplicate, or indecipherable entries. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively to identify trends, patterns, and borough-level variations. Open-text responses were examined using inductive thematic analysis, allowing emergent ideas and concerns to surface organically across the four domains.

Key findings from the Community-Level Survey were triangulated with insights from the Public Call for Evidence, stakeholder workshops, and archival analysis. This comparative approach enabled the identification of recurring themes, areas of critical need, and opportunities for targeted intervention. The survey also provided a wider array of voices to inform the report and its ability to provide more inclusive and contextually grounded account of basketball’s current state and future potential in London.

Basketball Taskforce Member Discussions

A series of one-to-one discussions were also conducted with members of the Mayor’s Basketball Taskforce between 24 June and 6 August 2025. These conversations provided valuable key organisational stakeholder and practitioner insights and strategic reflections on the current state and future direction of basketball in London. In addition, the inclusion of taskforce members’ voices was instrumental in underpinning this report with sector expertise and experience, ensuring that recommendations reflected both strategic vision and on-the-ground realities of key stakeholders to aid action, development and investment in the sport.

Each discussion lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. In cases where direct participation was not possible due to scheduling or other commitments, nominated colleagues acting as proxies contributed on behalf of members. While informal in tone, the discussions followed a consistent structure, exploring five key priority areas: Major Events, Infrastructure, Workforce Development, Youth Participation, and Professional Pathways. Participants also shared their assessments of London's basketball landscape, identified opportunities for collaboration and investment, and reflected on the taskforce's role in shaping future action.

To ensure accuracy and transparency, informal notes and verbatim transcripts were compiled during each session. These were reviewed post-discussion to confirm key points, clarify details, and incorporate any amendments or additional input from participants.

Analysis of the discussion data followed a two-stage process. First, each conversation was examined individually to capture unique perspectives and context-specific insights. Second, all discussion material was collated and compared to identify areas of synergy, divergence, and emerging priorities for taskforce attention. This inductive approach allowed themes to surface organically, revealing shared concerns, innovative ideas, and strategic opportunities across the five domains.

Key findings from the taskforce discussions were then triangulated with data from other engagement activities, including the Call for Evidence, community-level survey, and stakeholder workshops, to build a

comprehensive and coherent picture of basketball development in London. This process helped to validate recurring themes, highlight areas of critical need, and identify actionable pathways for policy, investment, and collaboration.

### **Stakeholder engagement workshops**

A series of 10 structured in-person and online stakeholder workshops and one-to-one discussions were also conducted, with representatives from a number of Local Authorities, clubs and events organisers involved in London's basketball ecosystem. Groups convened include the Hackney Jedis, Brixton Top Cats, Gladesmore Women's Basketball Club, Sparrows Wheelchair Basketball Club, organisers of the London Sports Festival, members of the Central London Alliance and Local Authorities. These sessions took place between 13 August and 9 October 2025 and were designed to capture a broad spectrum of practitioner and organisational insights. The intention was to provide further opportunities in-person and online to ensuring wider opportunities for the basketball community in London to inform the strategic vision and recommendations of the Mayor's Basketball Taskforce were grounded in real-world experience. Discussions and workshops were held on July 15, August 6, 13, 15, 21, 25, 26, 30, September 26, 30, and October 8, 2025.

Each workshop and discussion lasted between 60 and 90 minutes either online, at their venues or via telephone, and all the discussions followed a consistent framework to facilitate open yet focused dialogue. The methodology centred on five priority domains: Major Events, Infrastructure,



Workforce Development, Youth Participation, and Professional Pathways. Participants were invited to reflect on the current basketball landscape, identify gaps and opportunities, and propose practical actions for future development.

Each session was led by a GLA facilitator familiar with the work of the taskforce, and workshops began with opening questions to establish the defining characteristics of basketball in each borough and to surface areas for improvement. Thematic prompts guided discussion on leveraging major events for community benefit, infrastructure needs, workforce diversity and inclusion, youth engagement, and the sport’s future role in social inclusion and development.

To ensure transparency and accuracy, informal notes and transcripts were compiled during each session. These records were reviewed and amended post-discussion to confirm key points and incorporate additional input. Analysis involved individual review of each workshop to capture unique perspectives, followed by comparative synthesis with Call-for-Evidence, Community-Level Survey and Taskforce Member Discussions to identify common themes, divergences, and emerging priorities. Findings from these workshops were then incorporated into the report sections and actionable recommendations.

Key highlights include:

Lack of funding, infrastructure and discourse around wheelchair and women’s basketball in particular
General consensus that elite clubs are the focus, with less consideration and funding provision for non-elite and community clubs
Young players would rather ‘play than watch’
Lack of suitable courts and facilities, with those that are suitable being either too far or unaffordable for players and their families
Current venues prioritising other sports



**APPENDIX 2**

**SOURCE MATERIAL**

## Official documents and reports

All Party Parliamentary Report (2018) [The future of basketball in the UK](#)

Basketball England (2019) Annual report. [online]. Available from: <https://www.basketballengland.co.uk/media/10824/basketball-england-annual-report-2018-19.pdf>

Basketball England (2023) [London Coaches Program | Basketball England](#)

Basketball England (2024) Annual Report. [be-annual-report-2023-24.pdf](#)

[#ProjectSwish - Basketball England](#)

British Basketball (2016) [Transforming Basketball in Britain Together - BBF 12 Year Strategy & Vision Document | PDF](#)

Community Basketball League [WELCOME TO THE CBL | Community Basketball League](#)

Greenhouse Sports (2022) [Impact on Urban Health](#)

London Youth Games [Home - London Youth Games](#)

Major Events' Impact [Mitel and MLB Present London Series 2019 gives £37m boost to London's economy | Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park](#)

Sport England (2024) Active Lives Survey (Nov 22-23) [Active Lives Adult Survey November 2022-23 Report](#)

## Scholarly sources

Dashper, K. & King, J. (2022). The outdoors as a contested leisure terrain. *Annals of leisure research*, 25(3), 435-443 [tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/11745398.2021.1899832](https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2021.1899832)

Davies, L. E. (2016). A wider role for sport: Community sports hubs and urban regeneration. *Sport in Society*, 19(10), 1537–1555. <https://shura.shu.ac.uk/13249/1/Davies%20Wider%20role%20for%20sport%20.pdf>

Edwards, M. B. (2015). The role of sport in community capacity building: An examination of sport for development research and practice. *Sport management review*, 18(1), 6-19. [The role of sport in community capacity building: An examination of sport for development research and practice - ScienceDirect](#)

Jones, G., & Pritchard, A. (2021). Basketball and the city: Sport, space and identity in urban Britain. *Sport in History*, 41(2), 145–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2020.1864189>

Kohe, G. Z., Smith, J. C., & Hughson, J. E. (2021). #hoops #basketballhistory @Hoops\_Heritage: Examining possibilities for basketball heritage within the context of higher education, critical museology and digital redirections. *Sport in History*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2021.1952481>

Kohe, G.Z. (2017) Running with the ball?: Making a play for sport heritage archives in Higher Education, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2017.1378910>

Mogaji, E., & Nguyen, N. P. (2023). Beautiful Black British brand: exploring intersectionality of race, gender, and self-branding of Black British sportswomen. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 23(6), 1708-1731. [Full article: Beautiful Black British brand: exploring intersectionality of race, gender, and self-branding of Black British sportswomen](#)

Romyn, M. (2022). 'For them it was just a game but for us it was more': Black identity and the making of basketball in urban Britain. *History Workshop Journal*, 93(1), 69–94. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbac001>



- Picariello, M., Angelle, P. S., Trendafilova, S., Waller, S., & Ziakas, V. (2023). The role of mentoring in leadership development: A qualitative study of upper administration women in the National Basketball Association. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 8(1), 386-406. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24704067.2021.1871859>
- Russell, C., Morgan, H., & Campbell, N. (2023). Developing the basketball community: Supporting outdoor basketball courts social and community interactions (UK). *International Journal of Basketball Studies*, 2(1), 9–24. <https://ejournal.unma.ac.id/index.php/ijobs/article/view/5095/3240>
- Spaaij, R., Magee, J., Farquharson, K., Gorman, S., Jeanes, R., Lusher, D., & Storr, R. (2018). Diversity work in community sport organizations: Commitment, resistance and institutional change. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 53(3), 278-295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690216654296>
- Vieyra, F. (2016). Pickup basketball in the production of Black community. *Qualitative Sociology*, 39, 101-123. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-016-9324-9>
- Walker, R. S. (2024). Basketball, culture and society in a devolved context: A qualitative analysis [Doctoral dissertation, University of Edinburgh]. [https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/40966/WalkerRS\\_2023.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/40966/WalkerRS_2023.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- Ward, G., Scott, D., Hill, J., Richards, R., Hardman, A., Edwards, L., ... & Okpaje, T. (2023). British Universities and Colleges Sport: Race and Equality Research. [wlv.openrepository.com/server/api/core/bitstreams/fe3c857e-1456-4312-9fc9-fb7e558c3989/content](http://wlv.openrepository.com/server/api/core/bitstreams/fe3c857e-1456-4312-9fc9-fb7e558c3989/content)
- Wise, N., & Whittam, G. (2015). Special edition: Regeneration, enterprise, sport and tourism. *Local economy*, 30(8), 867-870. [Special edition: Regeneration, enterprise, sport and tourism - Nicholas Wise, Geoff Whittam, 2015](#)
- Widdop, P., King, N., Parnell, D., Cutts, D., & Millward, P. (2017). Austerity, policy and sport participation in England. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(1), 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2017.1348964>
- Woodhouse, J., & Audickas, L. (2018). *The future of basketball in the UK [Parliamentary Debate Pack]*. House of Commons Library. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0034/CDP-2018-0034.pdf>
- Youth Sport Trust. (2021). Basketball and youth development: Evaluating impact across UK schools. *Youth Sport Trust Research Series*. <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/research>

## Media Sources

- Basketball England (2023, Jan 27). [More than a million children and young people playing basketball every week - Sport England survey | Basketball England](#)
- Basketball England. (2025, August 4). NBA's Basketball Without Borders heading to Manchester. <https://www.basketballengland.co.uk/news/2025/nba-s-basketball-without-borders-heading-to-manchester/>
- Basketnews. (2024, November 6). Lucentum Basketball HUB launches global initiative to elevate basketball community. <https://basketnews.com/news-213645-lucentum-basketball-hub-launches-global-initiative-to-elevate-basketball-community.html>
- BBC Sport. (2015, July 17). Basketball: UK Sport's funding cut harming young people, say MPs. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/basketball/33555692>
- BBC Sport. (2024, March 12). Basketball England launches new youth development strategy. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/basketball/68682915>

BBC Sport. (2024, March 13). EuroCup: London Lions earn historic win as they reach semi-finals. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/basketball/68558710>

BBC Sport. (2024, March 19). Basketball England unveils new performance pathway. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/basketball/68784945>

Deeks, M. (2023, November 29). The London Lions are raising the standard of British basketball. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markdeeks/2023/11/29/the-london-lions-are-raising-the-standard-of-british-basketball>

Ehantharajah, V. (2021, April 4). British basketball has done so much with so little but its potential has never been greater. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/us-sport/nba/british-basketball-teams-players-b1825787.html>

ESPN News Services. (2025, July 30). Magic, Grizzlies to play in Berlin, London in 2026. ESPN. [https://www.espn.com/nba/story/\\_/id/45858302/magic-grizzlies-berlin-london-nba-sets-3-year-europe-plan](https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/45858302/magic-grizzlies-berlin-london-nba-sets-3-year-europe-plan)

FIBA. (2019, October 8). TIME-OUT 2.0 project to help players transition from sport into work set to launch in 2020. <https://www.fiba.basketball/en/news/time-out-2-0-project-to-help-players-transition-from-sport-into-work-set-to-launch-in-2020>

Greenhouse Sports. (n.d.). Positive Transitions. <https://www.greenhousesports.org>

Millington, A. (2015, August 6). NBA looks to build relevance in the UK and push its position as a 'global league'. Marketing Week. <https://www.marketingweek.com/nba-looks-to-build-relevance-in-the-uk-and-push-its-position-as-a-global-league/>

NBA. (2025, July 31). Grizzlies, Magic to play regular-season games in Berlin and London in 2026. NBA.com. <https://www.nba.com/news/nba-announces-3-year-slate-of-games-in-europe-beginning-in-2026>

Neter, S. (2025, May 21). Turnpike Lane basketball courts opened after renovation. Hoopsfix. <https://www.hoopsfix.com/2025/05/turnpike-lane-basketball-courts-opened-after-renovation>

Phillips, J. (2025, May 5). Trafalgar Square to host first basketball competition with NBA event. Evening Standard. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/trafalgar-square-basketball-competition-jr-nba-3x3-sadiq-khan-b1225695.html>

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. (2024). London Lions Basketball at Copper Box Arena. <https://www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/whats-on/london-lions-basketball>

Roan, D. (2020, November 19). Coronavirus-hit sports to benefit from £300m emergency funding rescue package. BBC Sport. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/54998979>

Sky Sports. (2025, July 30). NBA announces London and Manchester games as Memphis Grizzlies and Orlando Magic head to Europe. <https://www.skysports.com/more-sports/basketball/news/29877/13404035/nba-announces-london-and-manchester-games-as-grizzlies-and-orlando-magic-head-to-europe>

SportBusiness. (2025, July 30). European game picks highlight NBA's aspirations. Sport Business Journal. <https://www.sportbusiness.com/sport/basketball>

Visit London. (n.d.). Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park: The Copper Box Arena. <https://www.visitlondon.com/things-to-do/place/9356763-queen-elizabeth-olympic-park-the-copper-box-arena>

Wilson, B. (2009, January 26). NBA basketball eyes global expansion. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7844043.stm>

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the Basketball Taskforce Members and the Taskforce Secretariat for producing this report, and all stakeholders for their generosity in providing their expertise, insights and time.

### Basketball Taskforce Members:

- Nadeem Javaid (Chair)
- Lenz Balan (London Lions)
- Justine Baynes (British Wheelchair Basketball)
- Prof. Amanda Broderick (University of East London)
- Inua Ellams
- Neal Meyer (NBA)
- Simon Mills (UK Sport)
- Sam Neter (Hoopsfix)
- Phil Smith (Sport England, represented by James Plowright)
- Audrey Solvar (Basketball Africa League)
- Louise Thomas (Break Communications)
- Henry Utku (NBA)
- Nigel Walker (Basketball England)
- Luol Deng and associates
- Jeremy Sochan and associates

### Greater London Authority Taskforce Secretariat & Contributing Staff:

Dr Geoff Kohe (Report Lead), Paulina Turcan (Secretariat Lead), Bevis Allen, Lobna Benllahssen, Cedric Kabongo, Lottie England, Catherine McGovern, Jermaine Bryan, Gareth Plumb, Josie Ward.

### Contributing stakeholders:

- Charlotte Murray
- Michela Gilli
- Prof. David Hollander (New York University)
- Hackney Jedis
- Brixton TopCats
- Gladesmore Women's Basketball Club
- Sparrows Wheelchair Basketball Club
- London Sports Festival Organisers
- Central London Alliance Members
- London Local Authorities
- National Basketball Heritage Collection



# **MAYOR OF LONDON**

**[Basketball.taskforce@london.gov.uk](mailto:Basketball.taskforce@london.gov.uk)**