

Sports-based intervention (LSIM)

Research

Young Footballer Unknown

Key information

Publication type: General

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The programme

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) invests in targeted interventions to deliver sport and physical activity projects, which focus on tackling violence affecting young people.

With the support of the Mayor's sports team, activities are focused on not only competitive sport but physical and mental wellbeing, safety, and educational and employment outcomes in areas typically underserved by sports provision.

Funding is also provided for food and to help with travel costs to make it easier for young people to take part.

Evaluation summary and methodology

This research, conducted by Loughborough University, examined how sports programmes can play a role in mitigating young Londoners' experiences of violence and its impacts.

Researchers surveyed 28 sports programmes and interviewed six London-based coaches and managers. They found that sports interventions can support a process of "positive disruptive development" in the lives of young people. This is through the interplay of place, space, sport activity and hyper-local delivery of a sports intervention.

Key findings

Sports programmes required four elements to optimise the outcomes for participants:

- A **place**, location, or locality where the young person lives, where there is early exposure to risk factors for experiencing violence.
- A **safe space** within the place, which can shield the young person from risk factors for experiencing violence. A space for self-development, agency, relationships and fun.
- A **sports activity** which facilitates disruption from everyday life in the place, provides structure for being in the space, and builds positive relationship with mentors and peers.
- A **hyper-local approach**, so the unique conditions of each place are understood and bespoke interventions created.

Lessons learned

The report identified a number of recommendations for future delivery, in particular:

- Identifying opportunities for existing programmes to adopt the principles of disruptive development, to gain a richer understanding of the drivers of violence affecting young people.
- Build best practice networks within their locality and with external stakeholders.
- Provide entry points for police and professional services to positively disrupt, rather than exploiting, a safe space.
- Encourage leadership pathways for young people and family members.
- Develop tools for monitoring and evaluating intervention impact.
- Encouraging new programmes adopt principles of disruptive development.
- Applying the framework of place, space, sports, hyperlocal and build knowledge of each factor for their intervention.
- Go beyond a sports-only offer, to consider how the intervention can also provide informal educational activities to aid holistic development.
- Share learnings and lessons with sports and alternative interventions in other localities.
- Allocate future resource towards sport as a violence prevention strategy.
- Further research engaging young people to better understand the long- and short-term impacts of the Disruptive Development model.

Next steps

Building on these recommendations, the VRU has commissioned further research to expand the evidence base, validating and elaborating London's sports intervention model (LSIM).

This mixed-method research project aims develop the LSIM by assessing four key components:

- intersectionality

- type of sport
- youth voices, engagement and experience
- comparative localities and regional diversity.

A research report will be published by March 2025.

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