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## The value of sport and the arts

In July 2000, young people who had been brought from homelessness to employment were presented with awards by a charity which provides housing but insists on participation in arts or media activities in return. One young person, typical of those attending, found that a photography course gave him an interest, qualifications and motivation. 'It turned my life around,' he said.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms that every child has the right to rest and leisure, play and recreation. At the most basic level, sports and cultural facilities enable children to play by providing stimuli, imaginative frameworks and settings.

The belief that play, leisure and recreation are not only good things, but have the serious purpose of providing the skills and experience needed in adulthood is well established and supported by research. In this Briefing we recognise that they have intrinsic value, but we will concentrate on how the provision of activities and programmes can help overcome social exclusion and lead to positive outcomes in health, educational attainment, employment and crime reduction. The arts and drama also have therapeutic applications and can help children, including those with disabilities, to express their feelings free of everyday constraints. More generally, opportunities for physical activity and for expressing creativity are recognised among the factors for enhancing mental well-being and combating a poor sense of identity or low self-esteem.

The 'arts' includes all forms of dramatic, musical or visual arts and crafts activity, in whatever high- or low-tech medium and in whatever style - 'high' or 'low'. 'Sport', similarly, encompasses not only competitive activity but organised recreation and physical activity more widely. It includes cricket, working out in a gym, skating, cycling and recreational walking. There are many other activities to choose from.

In all of these activities, children and young people can 'consume', as spectators, or participate directly. There are important benefits for both individuals and communities in 'consuming' the arts and sport. Personal inspiration and insight may come from watching and following individuals, teams or groups as role models and from looking at works of art or listening to music. Community identity and pride can be generated, as young people gain a sense of place defined by the cultural activities that take place there. Here the focus is on the potential benefits of participation: creative expression, co-operative teamwork, individual physical exertion.

#### ARTS, SPORT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social exclusion is a shorthand term for what can happen when people (or areas) suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime

objectives 3 & 4:

to ensure that children in need and children looked after gain maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health care and social care

sub-objective 5.1:

making sure that young people who were in care when they were 16 are studying, training or working when they are 19.

environments, bad health and family breakdown. The essence of social inclusion is to apply 'joined up' solutions to these problems and the links between them or, better, to prevent them from arising. The Government judges the success of social inclusion through five key social outcomes:

- increased levels of educational attainment, for which there are specific targets in terms of pupil achievement
- increased employment rates in disadvantaged areas and groups
- reduced inequalities in health between different areas, for example measured by rates of cancer, heart disease and stroke, and narrowing the gap in rates of teenage pregnancy in different areas
- reduced crime, specifically domestic burglary
- reduced number of families living in bad housing, especially in the most deprived local authorities.

The contribution that arts and sport, culture and leisure activities can make to social inclusion was examined by one of the policy action teams (PAT) reporting to the Social Exclusion Unit in 1999. We draw heavily on that report and on two surveys of the available research which were commissioned for the policy action team.

The material collated by PAT10 shows that many programmes and projects use the arts and sport to promote social inclusion and community development. Many artists, sports people and arts or sport organisations are working with groups at risk of offending, with school refusers and with people with learning difficulties or from particular ethnic groups. PAT10 did not focus on looked after children but a trawl through social services departments confirms the existence of similar projects and programmes. There is much anecdotal evidence that they are successful and valued. The evidence and lessons incorporated into the analysis and recommendations in the PAT10 report therefore apply equally to the needs of looked after children.

To set the scene, here are some estimates of the time spent by the 'average' young person (aged 13-16) in England on selected out of school activities in 1999:

- |                                    |                        |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| • watching TV, video               | over 12 hours per week |
| • doing school homework            | nearly six hours       |
| • looking after younger children   | around five hours      |
| • playing computer games           | five hours             |
| • playing a musical instrument     | nearly four hours      |
| • reading books, magazines, comics | three hours            |
| • other hobbies                    | seven hours            |

If all these activities are considered to be mutually exclusive they account for an average of over six hours of time out-of-school a day. This is simply the overall average. There are differences between socio-economic groups and by ethnicity. Thirty per cent of young people are officially poor (compared to 23-24% of adults) and most who are looked after will be at or below this line. The latest report on sports participation in England shows that for adults only 39% of Caribbean and Indian, 31% of Pakistanis and 30% of Bangladeshis take part in sport once a month or more often (including walking two or more miles) compared to the national average of 46%. Information on people under the age of 20 is awaited. It is highly likely that similar discrepancies will be found for disabled children and adults but we have not yet tracked down any data on these.

There are demonstrable gender differences in the lives of young people and the extent to which they participate in the arts and sport. For example, boys tend to participate in different sports activities outside school and at a markedly higher rate. In 1999, football was the most popular outside school sport among boys aged 13-16 years, with a participation rate of 63%. The top rate among girls of 40% was for swimming. Generally, boys are more likely than girls to play team games outside lessons. Voluntary sports and arts clubs and societies have a role to play in providing opportunities for participation and can also draw in parents and carers to share in recreational hobbies and pursuits.

Sport and recreation are regarded as having a significant social cachet among young people and are used as a means of engagement. For example, the Youth Inclusion Programme, administered by the Home Office and managed by the Youth Justice Board, now has sport and recreation as mandatory components. Similarly, the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE) Playing for Success scheme aims to improve numeracy, literacy and computer skills in combination with sessions at professional football clubs.

Involvement and participation are key elements in social inclusion, no less so for young people than for adults. Morris has suggested that as a general principle participation helps to improve the social care of children. It is also important to recognise the strength that children draw from coming together with others who have similar experiences. The Sutton case study over the page illustrates one London Borough's strategy for listening to looked after children.

#### **TACKLING THE CAUSES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

PATro listed distinctive contributions that the arts and sport can make:

- **engaging and strengthening local communities**  
Arts and sport lend themselves to voluntary collaborative arrangements, which help to develop a sense of community. They help communities to express their identity and develop their own, self-reliant organisations and relate directly to individual and community identity - the very things that need to be restored if neighbourhoods are to be renewed
- **an emphasis on people, not buildings or places**  
Arts and sport bestow social, organisational and marketable skills. They bring out hidden talents which can have lasting benefits; they give individuals greater self-respect, self-confidence and a sense of achievement - all contributing to greater self-esteem and improved mental well-being. All of these qualities are particularly valuable to looked after children, who may experience rather more buildings and places than other children
- **encouraging development**  
Arts and sport are closely connected with the fast-growing creative, leisure and tourism industries, which in turn provide powerful positive role models for those living in deprived neighbourhoods. They bring economic benefits both to communities, with increased employment opportunities, and to individuals, by equipping them with transferable skills. They help develop their personal confidence, flexibility and self-reliance on which success in the changing employment market increasingly depends.

PATro's recommendations are addressed to government departments and agencies, local authorities, National Lottery fund distributors and other bodies involved in cultural activities or in regeneration. Pointers to good practice that are relevant to children and young people's participation in cultural, arts and sport activities are given below.

## **RESEARCH AND EVALUATION**

Flood-Page (1999) has reported that in many respects the leisure patterns of 'disengaged' young people do not differ markedly from those of other young people. In the main, all young people's leisure activities are a mix of home-based entertainment (especially watching TV) and 'going out', with a significant minority playing sport or 'hanging around'. However, the research shows that the disengaged less often take part in activities costing money or that involve parental expenditure. So, they are less likely to participate in sports (other than snooker, darts or pool), to visit the cinema or theatre, to use a computer for fun, to read a book for pleasure or to play a musical instrument.

There is relatively little hard evidence about the costs and benefits of arts and sport in social inclusion projects, or about what sorts of project provide best value for money. There is a need for better information and further analyses of expenditure and outcomes. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is working with a number of projects to monitor and evaluate their impact; it is also exploring the scope for longer-term assessment of the impact of arts and sport, including community development programmes, and using existing, national cohort studies, which track the progress of groups of people over many years.

Recognising the importance of proper evaluation, there are some recommendations in the PATro report that are widely applicable to arts and sport projects and programmes:

- that wherever possible, external evaluation, and the means to carry it out, should be integral to the project or programme
- that the criteria against which success is judged should be clearly established and should derive directly from the expressed needs and aims of those benefiting.

None of this is meant to discourage the promotion of the arts and sport in helping looked after children and young people, but simply to stress that there is little substantive, systematic research on which to base any implementation strategy. Research and evaluation in sport and the arts does not always match the methodological rigour of health, crime or educational research. The role of arts and sport in meeting social outcomes has not been fully conceptualised. For example, a recent review of the social and economic factors now known to be the most powerful determinants of health does not include the arts or sport and makes only a passing reference to exercise. This may help to explain why the arts and sport are sometimes invisible, as in a recent study of the impact of social exclusion on young people moving into adulthood.

The research that has been reported, case studies especially, nevertheless provides a powerful testimony that the arts and sport can make a real contribution to young people's lives. On the other hand, researchers in the Home Office conclude that simply diverting young people into leisure and recreation facilities probably does not prevent crime. It is now accepted

that, to be effective, single measure interventions need to be ‘joined up’ within a range of complementary measures which target various risk factors. Coalter et al (2000) support this view, in research for the Scottish Executive and Sports Scotland. They propose ways in which sport can more fully realise its potential contribution to a range of social issues. The report is based on an extensive literature review and ten case studies. One of the main findings is that early intervention - at primary school - is more effective than later intervention.

Research studies tackle some very specific and relevant topics. For example, Sherwood reflects that watching a play may provide better therapy for adolescents with social, emotional and behavioural problems than taking part in an improvisation, (but this paper does not describe the effects or longer term outcomes of such drama work). This kind of research might be seen to fit within research into the effects and effectiveness of arts education in schools (eg Harland et al).

#### **A CASE STUDY:**

#### **CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SUTTON**

The London Borough of Sutton has been working with a voluntary organisation ‘Moving Forward Together’ to engage with children and young people and to sustain the dialogue. Part of the process is a series of activity-based, half day consultations. Those focussing on arts, sport and leisure facilities took place at a local theatre and at a leisure centre, providing young people with the opportunity to try out a wide range of arts and sport activities, all of which were taken up with great enthusiasm. Another strand to consultation is through ‘My Shout’ magazine, designed and edited by a team of looked after children and young people and circulated to all looked after children and young people who are the responsibility of Sutton. Other case studies are listed in the referenced version of this Briefing on the research in practice website.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE IN AREAS OF HIGH DEPRIVATION**

As part of their response to PATro, the Children’s Play Council included a summary of good practice in play projects in areas of high deprivation. The five features they identify should have general relevance and appeal.

- 1 Supervisory staff should adopt a style that maximises children’s say over activities and interactions, and that fosters relationships based on trust between staff, children and parents, within boundaries that are explicit and clearly understood.
- 2 Children and parents should actively participate in planning and service delivery, ensuring the local community has a strong sense of ownership (see QP Research Briefing no. 3 for further information and advice on young people’s participation).
- 3 There should be good working links with social services departments, the police, early years, youth and educational services.
- 4 The service style should be inclusive and non-discriminatory, with good access for local children of all abilities.
- 5 There should be a range of spaces, indoor and outdoor, and a range of activities available.

## ELEVEN WAYS TO TEST POSSIBILITIES

- 1 Work in partnership with the arts and leisure department.**

For instance, Leicester City Council SSD negotiated free access to some arts and leisure facilities for looked after children and for foster families, with discounts on some other facilities. Taster sessions have also been offered free at leisure centres. Training opportunities and work experience have been arranged, as well as free access to the internet and a book amnesty in libraries.
- 2 Encourage looked after children to include cultural and sporting achievements in their personal education plan.**

For example, a child might wish to develop her or his athletic skills and to be selected for a school team, or to be successful in the audition for a school play.
- 3 Seek out creative arts and sports learning partnerships in the area.**

For instance, DAISI, the Devon Artists in Schools Initiative, has compiled a directory of over 200 artists who work locally in schools or other educational contexts.
- 4 Encourage carers to take children to local theatres, libraries, museums, galleries and sports clubs.**

Many arts, sport and cultural organisations, including professional sports clubs will already have education or outreach programmes in place, which will offer opportunities in addition to those that may be available through school. Look out for Saturday Clubs, After-School Clubs, Arts Centres, Arts Forums, Youth Theatres, etc. Regional or national cultural institutions also provide opportunities for participation. For instance, the Department of Health (Quality Protects), the British Film Institute and the BFI London IMAX® Cinema organised a Project Animation 2000 'to help give a voice to young people in the looked after system'.
- 5 Be prepared to look for ways to sustain a child's interest and participation.**

Small scale activities that enhance a child's self-esteem can have large benefits, but there may be some initial reluctance to take part through a fear of rejection or simply through not being familiar with what is going on.
- 6 Use the market place.**

From September 2001, the Connexions Card should be available across the country. This is a 'smart card' to be distributed to all 16-19 year olds in learning which offers a wide range of discounts in leisure, cultural and transport services as well as in high street stores.
- 7 Work in effective partnerships with private and voluntary organisations as a good way to pool limited resources and find a creative mix of skills and talents.**

For instance, a drama group based in the Greater Manchester coalition of disabled children and young people has very successfully highlighted the issues and problems that face disabled young people in their everyday lives.

- 8 **Work in partnership with local people in order to encourage participation and to build their capacity to sustain and develop projects.**
- 9 **Engage directly with people: this means actively recognising diversity, for example by taking part in Carnival and other celebrations of a community's cultural life.**
- 10 **Consult sports and disability development officers and disabled children's services for advice and information. Disability Sport England has offices in every region.**
- 11 **Explore all potential funding sources. The possibilities include the arts and sports councils, Lottery funding, area-based and other regenerative initiatives, charitable trusts and foundations.**

## EVALUATION

- Wherever possible, external evaluation, and the means to carry it out, should be integral to a project or programme. While many schemes are now monitored for outputs (eg based on numbers completing the scheme and short term assessments) any outcomes in terms of long term change will inevitably take several years to emerge. Rarely is money set aside for a longer term follow-up of scheme participants or for maintaining contact.
- The criteria against which success is judged should be clearly established and take full account of the expressed needs and aims of those benefiting.
- Longer term impacts and benefits should be sustained. If it is impractical to maintain contact with participants, departments and agencies should consider whether a joint approach to a cohort study is feasible.
- Evaluators should have appropriate skills and training, and could well include young people themselves. First Key offer training for young researchers.
- Evaluation reports should be made widely available.

## STEPS TOWARDS A PRACTICAL AGENDA

- Promote working partnerships between departments (SSDs, arts and leisure, education, health, the voluntary sector) to develop a joined-up approach to the health, welfare and quality of life of looked after children and young people, for instance by linking sports clubs and arts groups to the places where they live.
- Explore whether there are benefits to a cross-departmental/agency approach to parenting and carers. For example, does the education department approach the role that it attributes to parents and carers differently from social services or arts and leisure?
- Recognise the needs of children and young people, including looked after children, within local and regional cultural strategies.
- Develop a strategy for listening to and responding to children and young people.
- Examine the case for participating in the Connexions Card scheme, by providing leisure discounts, possibly tying in with existing leisure or loyalty cards, appropriate to local needs and circumstances.

## KEY RESOURCES: RESEARCH

Bateson P and Martin P, 1999. *Design for a life*. Cape

Biddle SJH, Fox KR and Boutcher SH (eds), 2000. *Physical activity and psychological well-being*. Routledge

Coalter F, Allison M and Taylor J, 2000. *The role of sport in regenerating deprived areas*. The Stationery Office

Dennison C and Coleman J, 2000. *Young people and gender: a review of research*. Women's Unit, Cabinet Office

Flood-Page C, 1999. *Disengaged teenagers: findings from the 1998/9 Youth Lifestyle Survey*. Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office

Gordon D et al, 2000. *Poverty and social exclusion in Britain*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. York Publishing Services Ltd.

Harland J et al, 2000. *Arts education in secondary schools: effects and effectiveness*. National Foundation for Educational Research

Matarasso F, 1997. *Use or ornament: the social impact of participation in the arts*. Comedia

Nuttall C, Goldblatt P and Lewis C (eds), 1998. *Reducing offending: an assessment of research evidence on ways of dealing with offending behaviour*. Research Study 187, Home Office

Policy Action Team 10, 1999a. *Research report: Arts and Neighbourhood Renewal*. (A literature review to inform the work of Policy Action Team 10, by Phyllida Shaw). Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Policy Action Team 10, 1999b. *Research report: Sport and Social Exclusion*. (A report to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport by Michael F Collins, with Ian P Hendry, Barrie Houlihan, James Buller). Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Sherwood A, 1998. *Therapeutic applications of drama for adolescents with social, emotional and behavioural problems*. *Drama*, Vol 5 No 3, Summer 1998

## POLICY AND EVALUATION GUIDANCE

Policy Action Team 10, 1999c. *Arts and sport: a report to the Social Exclusion Unit*. Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Woolf, F. 1999. *Partnerships for learning: a guide to evaluating arts education projects*. Arts Council of England

## SOME OTHER RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

Visit the Social Exclusion Unit's website at [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu) for their reports, contacts and general information about social exclusion.

Some arts and sports projects tackling social inclusion are featured on the DCMS website at [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk).

The Community Care supplement on Quality Protects (November 2000) shows how co-operation between district and county councils can provide looked after children with a broad range of opportunities.

Further details, and a summary, of *Playing for Success* can be found on the DfEE website at [www.dfee.gov.uk](http://www.dfee.gov.uk).

The address of Disability Sport England is: Mary Glen Haig Suite, Sole Cast House, 13-27 Brunswick Street, London N1 6DX. Tel: 0207 490 4919. Fax: 0207 490 4914

QP Research Briefing 3 is about *Young people's participation*. *Make it happen!* is a report published in October 2000 on six children and young people's participation events, with advice for local authorities on how to organise similar events. Available from the Department of Health, PO Box 777, London SE1 6XH or email: [doh@prolog.uk.com](mailto:doh@prolog.uk.com)

This briefing was prepared by Paul Allin, Head of Statistics & Social Policy Unit, Department for Culture, Media and Sport ([paul.allin@culture.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:paul.allin@culture.gsi.gov.uk)), who has a specialist interest in sports and arts. Paul is grateful to Ian Darbyshire, Greenwich Social Services Department, for his comments on a draft and to other local authority practitioners who responded so enthusiastically to a call from **research in practice** for examples of what works.

For a fully referenced version of this Briefing visit the **research in practice** website: [www.rip.org.uk](http://www.rip.org.uk)

