



Inquiry: Social impact of participation in sports and culture

Written evidence submitted by Spirit of 2012

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1. Spirit of 2012 is a charitable trust founded in 2013 with a £47 million endowment from the Big Lottery as the legacy charity from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our purpose is fund projects that bring people together through arts, physical activity and volunteering in order to provide positive social outcomes for individuals and communities.
2. We explicitly and relentlessly focus our funding on achieving social outcomes, rather than viewing these as a by-product of sports, culture and associated volunteering, and we support our project partners to measure and articulate what that impact has been.
3. In the past two years we have noticed more funders adopting aspects of our approach, and commissioning for outcomes, particularly around wellbeing (for example Sport England's measurement framework) but we also recognise that measurement of social outcomes is complex. Many arts and sports organisations who are doing good work struggle to measure and articulate their social outcomes because of limited capacity and experience. That's why we support our grantees to do this, and why we procured an evaluation support contract with the Behavioural Insights Team to provide their expertise to our grantees.

Which programmes best demonstrate the positive social impact that participating in sport and culture can have on the five central themes of this inquiry?

Health

4. All Spirit projects measure whether the mental wellbeing of participants increases during the course of the project. An independent evaluation of our funding, spanning three years and published in October 2017, found a 9% increase in the number of participants with high wellbeing across our project portfolio. For some participants, the effects of taking part in a weekly walking group, table tennis session or dance class have been transformational. It is not the activity itself that has the greatest impact, but the way that it is delivered: with an emphasis on socialising and a volunteer model that focuses on peer support and small steps rather than traditional coaching. One participant in our Scottish Government Funded *Legacy 2014* programme had struggled with mental and physical health for years, and was regularly admitted to hospital suffering psychiatric distress. Previously inactive, she joined

KA Leisure's regular walking programme in North Ayrshire, progressing from participant to volunteer as a walk guide. She explained that she was very anxious attending her initial sessions, and found the gentle reminder phone calls when she missed a session instrumental to her continued participation in the programme. She explained that taking part "has brought back my self-worth." Since joining the programme, she has not had to be admitted to hospital.

5. Loneliness: Many of our projects focus on reaching out to the most isolated people in a community. We know that loneliness can be just as damaging for health as diseases like diabetes, and contribute to inequalities in healthy life expectancy that see the poorest people in the UK live almost seventeen fewer years in good health compared to their more affluent peers. Several of our projects have engaged with GPs and other health professionals in delivering activities that tackle loneliness. A community group in Kingstanding, Birmingham, funded through the *Fourteen* project, received a small grant (£400) to deliver a community meal. Local GPs saw such benefits from this event that they agreed to fund the meal and refer people to it on a monthly basis. Projects that focus on quality of life frequently deliver positive health outcomes. Creative Arts East run weekly activities for dementia sufferers and their carers to enjoy dance, music and arts together: the Spirit funded *Our Day Out* programme is founded on the recognition that both dementia sufferers and carers can experience profound loneliness, and that finding positive activities that sufferers and carers can participate in together, alongside others in the community, is an important way of reducing that isolation.
6. In sport and physical activity interventions specifically, we have found that a 'small steps' approach is most effective to engage the least active, rather than the potentially alienating Chief Medical Officer targets of '30 minutes a day'. We have invested £4.5 million in *Get Out Get Active (GOGA)*, a programme delivered by a consortium of organisations under the leadership of the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) to reach the least active in eighteen communities across the UK. In its first year, this has seen more than 20,000 inactive people get involved in physical activity. We know that there is lots of fantastic sports provision out there; the issue is that it is not reaching the people on whom it could have the most impact. Across *GOGA*, the *Legacy 2014 Physical Activity Fund*, and the *Sporting Equality Fund* (these last two funded by the Scottish government), the emphasis has been on supporting those running existing high-quality activities to reach underserved individuals.

Partnership working has been crucial to their successes so far: for too long, offers for inactive people have been advertised in leisure centres and sports halls – places where by definition inactive people do not go. National delivery partners in *GOGA* and *Legacy 2014* have concentrated their efforts on reaching the least active people where they are: care homes, community centres and local parks. Sports practitioners have then delivered training for community staff and volunteers to be able to run low cost or free sessions in their community to ensure a sustainable legacy. The partnership between traditional sports providers, and the volunteers or professionals who understand, work regularly with, or are actually part of the target demographic is crucial.

Crime reduction

7. We fund Verbal Arts Centre's *Reading Rooms* project, which brings young ex-offenders together in community reading groups. In the first year, participants' anxiety decreased, and average happiness and life satisfaction increased. Many participants have been referred to the project by their probation officers, and Probation Service Northern Ireland are looking at expanding it. We will be monitoring recidivism rates over the next two years. This a low-cost project which builds skills and is life-affirming for participants, and we are excited to track its impact on crime reduction.
8. We recently announced a £1.8 million grant to the Youth Sport Trust and Sporting Equals to bring segregated communities together through shared love of cricket. Working with community cohesion expert Professor Ted Cattle, we will be monitoring this grant's impact on social cohesion, including rates of hate crime and civic engagement.

Community engagement

9. Sports and cultural programmes can have a profound impact on community engagement, increasing a sense of belonging, trust and pride in the local area. Hull's transformational City of Culture programme is a case in point, and demonstrates what can happen when high quality art combines with genuine commitment to tell stories with and for local people. Spirit provided £2.85 million to the City of Culture programme, including funding the exceptional *Land of Green Ginger*, a participatory arts project that took local myths and transformed them into 'acts of wanton wonder'. This project saw the highest levels of engagement from residents in the poorest parts of the city, and makes it difficult to

maintain that cultural experiences that are “experimental” or “challenging” are only for people in the highest income brackets. Local pride in Hull had already increased 9% three months into 2017. At our Spirit Summit in October, one volunteer perfectly encapsulated this change: “People in Hull used to look at the ground – now they look at the sky.” The skilled and enthusiastic volunteer team have changed their own perceptions of their city and played a key role in changing that perception in others.

Community participation

10. The Southbank Centre’s *Women of the World* (WOW) also offers a model of how an arts and culture programme can develop community engagement with a lasting legacy. Spirit has funded *WOW* to take its programme out regionally to Bradford, Norwich, Cardiff, Perth and Exeter. The first of these regional WOWs was held in Bradford in 2016. Local people of all ages and ethnicities could input into the design of the festival at pre-event ‘Think-Ins’, whilst a group of ten 15-18 year old ‘Wowzers’ shaped the content in an extended volunteering programme. Feedback testified to its community impact, with a participant explaining: “[I] gained a lot of confidence meeting strangers all the time and it gave me a new-found love for Bradford and a stronger connection with the city.” Events such as these can be a catalyst for participants’ deeper engagement in their community: from the Bradford event, we know of at least 39 different events, new networks and opportunities that have sprung up as a result of connections made at the original festival.

Diversity

11. Projects are most likely to achieve a positive social impact if there is an explicit focus on *inclusive* participation, and for Spirit it is essential that disabled and non-disabled people are given opportunities to participate together in all aspects of a project, including as decision-makers.

How can access to cultural and sporting professions be improved to enable greater diversity?

12. Spirit believes that increasing the diversity of cultural and sports workforce is essential, not only so that we can all benefit from a wider pool of creativity and talent, but because with more representative sectors, will come more representative participants and audiences, and so on in a virtuous circle. Under-represented groups need to see stories, performers and participants that are like them, and there needs to be representation from these groups in decision-making too. At an elite level, we have funded work such as Shape Art's *Unlimited Impact* programme, to give talented disabled artists an opportunity to develop and exhibit their work in professional venues. Vocal allies from institutions who can offer platforms for this work is vital, and formed an integral part of that project. It was also a feature of the three-part programme for which we funded Stockton Arc and Little Cog: commission disabled-led art, build new disabled audiences through participatory projects at the venue, and provide comprehensive disability awareness training to theatre staff.
13. Institutions need to make a concerted effort to ensure their workforce, including volunteers, is reflective of the participants they intend to attract. We are currently funding England Athletics to increase the diversity of their volunteering workforce following the 2017 World Athletics Championships in London, with a particular emphasis on recruiting more young people and people from BAME communities: groups which make up a substantial proportion of participants, but with much lower rates of 'converting' into volunteering and professional roles within the sport.
14. Cultural and sporting institutions should plan explicitly for diversity in their recruitment processes. Battersea Arts Centre, South London Gallery and Oasis Play, produced an excellent guide to accessible recruitment as part of their three-year creative partnership, *Making Routes*. Their guidance, aimed at recruiting diverse artists for a residencies programme, is applicable across the sector. Their advice includes offering application materials in different formats (audio, easy read), making explicit that there is funding available for support needs, and holding paid 'inspiration days' that cover the costs for applicants to learn more about the organisation and the project.
15. Through our *GOGA* programme, we are encouraging wider uptake of EFDS's [Talk to Me](#) principles. Originally designed to support sports providers to reflect on how they could

make their sport more appealing to disabled people, they contain much common-sense good practice that can be applied to increasing participation from many underserved groups - including encouraging applications for professional roles.

Why has government not co-ordinated its efforts more effectively?

16. Mega events such as the Olympic & Paralympic Games have organising committees that fully integrate sports, cultural and volunteering strands into a cohesive whole. This holistic approach is not reflected in policy and government structures generally which makes it difficult for delivery organisations to collaborate and to navigate a 'gated' landscape in which sectors, funded and monitored separately from each other, are by nature disposed, as well as encouraged to emphasise their distinctiveness rather than collaborating to recognise how much they have in common.

Has the sport sector been better for social mobility than the arts? If so, why?

17. The sports world also has a longer history of formally supporting young participants to recognise the transferable skills that they learn from taking part in sports. Led by organisations such as Youth Sport Trust and Sporting Equals (both Spirit grantees), young people are often able to articulate what they gain from taking part in a way that makes sense to employers. This is less well established in arts, and indeed the narrative is sometimes explicitly defined as not about work - but about time to oneself, personal reflection - which makes it less likely that people will draw on experiences gained through arts and culture when explaining their skill-set. However, there are projects which do make the connection between skills development and cultural participation more explicit. DanceSyndrome, an inclusive dance charity funded by Spirit, trains people with learning disabilities to be dance leaders, and they then go on to run dance classes for disabled and non-disabled people together. Beacon Hill Arts, another Spirit grantee, runs *Viewfinder*, a project for young people with learning disabilities to develop film-making skills, producing their own creative work, and working on films for external organisations. Both projects develop the employability skills of participants whilst enabling them to take part in something they love.

How can museums, galleries and other cultural venues boost access and social impact?

18. Many of our projects have achieved greatest success when they have taken art to non-traditional venues, settings that are regularly frequented by the groups that they are hoping to attract. Hull 2017 shows how this can build cultural confidence, an approach which increases the likelihood that residents will then venture to traditional venues, but also encouraging innovation in community settings too. It leads to the creation of beautiful work such as [Goodwin Development Trust's art installation](#) in the windows of a housing estate. Initiatives like this have meant that more than nine in ten of Hull residents have taken part in Hull 2017 activity this year.

19. Partnership working is crucial. Institutions who are serious about making a change need to define their ambition and work with partner organisations that have access to the underserved groups that they are hoping to attract. They should also set ambitions for embedding changes in practice at the outset, and ensure that staff at all levels of the organisation are given time and training to apply what they have learnt to their area.

20. Organisations should explicitly measure their social impact, not with the ambition of "proving" that they have had one, but in an open spirit of learning: not all initiatives will work, and organisations need to try new things and measure what changes as a result. We know that this will put many organisations outside their comfort zone: it would involve changes to KPIs that move away from visitor numbers and ticket sales, and many would not have in-house evaluation expertise. This is why they will need both the challenge from funders and commissioners to provide the impetus to do it, and the support to get there.