



£53bn cost to UK economy of physically inactive young people

- New report, *'The Inactivity Time Bomb'*, published by national sports charity, StreetGames and Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr)
- Each physically inactive young person costs UK economy £12,000 over their lifetime
- Lowest-income households most likely to have least active children
- Poorest households spend less than £2 a week on sport

London – 1st April 2014 - Physical inactivity among today's 11-25 year olds will cost the UK economy £53.3 billion over their lifetimes, according to a new StreetGames/Cebr report published today.

£8.1 billion of these costs are directly related to spending on healthcare that will be needed to deal with the burden of Type II diabetes, chronic heart disease, stroke and colon cancer among this cohort as they age. This equates to £1,800 in additional healthcare costs for each child and young person who is currently inactive, and is equivalent to more than half the total budget of NHS England in 2013-14.

The cost of reduced quality of life and lower life expectancy is even higher, at nearly £10,000 per child or young person. This amounts to **£45.2 billion** across the total population of children and young people who are currently failing to meet recommended levels of activity¹.

The [report](#) found nearly half of all 11-25 year olds in England fail to achieve the Chief Medical Officer's recommended targets for physical activity² – over 4.5m individuals. Overall, girls and young women are less active: 56% fail to meet recommended activity levels compared to 39% of boys and young men. The study highlights that the overall picture may be even worse: accelerometry data collected alongside self-reported activity levels suggests that self-reporting data overstates activity levels.

Critically, children of both genders from lower income households are less likely to take part in sport. The report showed that children from lower income households are less likely to take part in formal sports activities such as organised team games of rugby, cricket or netball, swimming, gymnastics, aerobics and tennis.

There is also a strong negative relationship between household income and the proportion of total household spending which is on recreational sport. The poorest households spend just a tenth of the amount that the richest households spend on sport activities, services and equipment each week, equating to less than £2 per week.

Jane Ashworth OBE, CEO of StreetGames, the national sports charity which commissioned the study, said: "This report lays bare the economic and social cost we will pay if we don't get our young people moving. If we fail to address these issues it is akin to sitting on a time bomb. Helping young people in the most difficult circumstances take up a sporting habit for life is one of the most important things we can do."

Dr William Bird, who wrote the foreword to the report, said: "Diseases like diabetes are on the increase, yet 80% of cases are preventable by making simple lifestyle changes. Our bodies were designed to be active and as soon as we become sedentary our ageing process accelerates and we create a perfect environment to initiate disease. Getting active can also improve mental health: active young people are more alert, and less likely to suffer from stress or depression. Physical activity is fundamental to young people developing normally and leading happy lives. We have to innovate and get young people moving earlier in their lives and then maintain that habit throughout adolescence and beyond."

The work being undertaken by many different organisations, including StreetGames and its network of partners, is starting to make a difference and helping to address the sporting inequality gap. The latest Sport England survey data shows that since April 2012 the number of young people from the lowest socio-economic groups in England taking part in sport every week has risen by 51,100, from 1,140,600 to 1,191,700. The StreetGames/Cebr report found that a 1% increase in the number of children and young people meeting physical activity targets could save £800 million in today's prices over their lifetimes. For many inactive young people sport will be the pathway to activity – they find it more pleasurable than other forms of activity such as walking or cycling to work or school.

But there is no room for complacency, as Ashworth continues: "We know young people want to play more sport but we have to innovate to make this happen. From consulting with thousands of young people across the UK, we've created sessions that meet their needs. Young people say to us that they want a vibrant and varied offer that requires little commitment and is more social than competitive. They tell us that they prefer this new style of sport – that we call 'doorstep sport' - to other traditional offers."

Sport England Chief Executive, Jennie Price, said: "We are investing up to £20m in initiatives like StreetGames and Doorstep Sports Clubs to give young people from disadvantaged communities the chance to get active and play sport in a way that appeals to them. We are also challenging many of the other organisations we fund to learn from StreetGames' success in engaging young people who may feel the conventional sport sector is not for them."

Dr Ann Hoskins, Director of Children and Young People at Public Health England, said: "This report is a welcome contribution to the evidence base by demonstrating how the cost to our communities of insufficient physical activity amongst young people is borne socially and economically, not just in

health terms. I also applaud the focus on inequalities, as levels of inactivity are not uniform across our society. We need to have particular focus on individuals and communities with the lowest levels of physical activity and therefore greatest need. The work of StreetGames exemplifies the need to recognise, support and harness the diversity of forms and places in which people do physical activity in communities. We look forward to continue working with them and others to enable everybody to be active every day.”

Notes to editors

¹ The cost of reduced quality of life and lower life expectancy is measured in Quality-adjusted life years (QALYs) and valued at the lower bound rate of £20,000. QALYs are a standardised measure of health gain, which takes into account both length and quality of life. For full methodology appendix, see pages 20/26/27 of the Cebr/StreetGames report.

² Official guidelines recommend that children and young people aged 11-18 spend an hour of every day being physically active. This includes ‘moderate intensity’ activities, such as playground games, cycling and walking to school, or ‘higher intensity’ activities like running and football. These guidelines were set jointly by the four UK Chief Medical Officers, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-physical-activity-guidelines>

- The full StreetGames/Cebr report: *The Inactivity Time bomb – the economic cost of physical inactivity in young people* - is available to download at www.streetgames.org/inactivitytimebomb or on request by emailing streetgames@capellapr.com
- Interviews with Jane Ashworth, Dr William Bird available on request
- Case studies of StreetGames projects addressing health issues by getting young people active are available

Further support for the report and StreetGames:

“There is well documented evidence that low levels of physical activity are associated with an increased risk of health problems including chronic heart disease, strokes and type II diabetes. This report clearly emphasises the economic case for investment in physical activity as a preventative health measure and tool in tackling health inequalities, particularly in the most deprived areas. It is further evidence that we must increase awareness of the health benefits of physical activity and facilitate more opportunities for young people to engage in sport from an early in age. We must recognise it is often the most deprived areas which are the least active and acknowledge both the economic and health benefits when implementing strategies to improve health.”

Shirley Cramer CBE, Chief Executive, Royal Society for Public Health

“Collaboration with organisations such as StreetGames is important for NHS England so that we practice what we preach, share ideas and knowledge, listen carefully and thoughtfully, address failure and celebrate success. Together we can achieve greater things to support young people and tackle social inequalities. In partnership we can promote better emotional and physical wellbeing for all.”

Kath Evans, Head of Patient Experience – Maternity, Newborn, Children and Young People, NHS England

“This report clearly shows that getting our young people more active will have a major impact on their health and wellbeing for the whole of their lives. We know from our work as the strategic partner for youth to the

Department of Health that preventative work is so important in keeping young people healthy and averting long term health conditions. There are also massive savings generated for the NHS as the prevalence of diseases such as diabetes, coronary heart disease and colon cancer is significantly reduced.”

Faiza Khan MBE, Deputy CEO, National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) and Coordinator of the Young People’s Health Partnership

“This important report by StreetGames highlights the growing problem of physical inactivity in young people and the enormous costs that this is having over their lifetime. It is shocking that nearly half of all 11-25 year olds in England fail to achieve the Chief Medical Officer’s recommended levels of physical activity, costing taxpayers more than £53 billion over their lifetimes. We know that active children are far more likely to become active adults yet our ‘Turning the tide of inactivity’ report shows that there are 12.5 million inactive adults in England. If we are to make serious progress in turning the tide of inactivity then urgent action is needed to encourage communities and families to be more active, more often.” **Fred Turok, Chair of the Responsibility Deal Physical Activity Network, ukactive**

“This report clearly highlights stark differences in levels of physical inactivity across income groups. The report shows that children from all walks of life are not getting enough physical activity, but that this is more of an issue in the poorest households where nearly a half don’t get enough exercise. More clearly needs to be done to ensure that income is not a barrier to participation in physical activity and we support the work of StreetGames in trying to achieve this aim.” **Angela Donkin, Senior Advisor at the Institute of Health Equity, Institute for Health Equity**

“This report shows that getting our young people active will have an impact that will reach far beyond just the health of the young people themselves but could have a positive effect on the whole of the UK.” **Douglas McWilliams, Executive Chairman, Cebr**

About StreetGames

StreetGames (www.streetgames.org) is an award-winning national sports charity launched in 2007. A national partner of Sport England and a national centre of expertise for developing sport in disadvantaged communities, the charity helps to make sport accessible to all young people, regardless of their income or social circumstances. It does this by supporting and establishing local projects around the UK that deliver doorstep sport, i.e. positive activities and sport provided to young people when they want it, where they want it and how they want it. Over 2.4 million attendances have already been generated by StreetGames projects.

StreetGames’ ongoing work to change sport, communities and lives has been recognised by The Chief Medical Officer’s Public Health Awards, The Charity Awards, The Business Charity Awards and Beyond Sport. Additionally, in 2011, StreetGames’ Chief Executive Jane Ashworth was awarded an OBE for services to community sport. These commendations demonstrate StreetGames’ effectiveness in sport and wider impact on crime, health and community development.

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