

11. Promoting co-curricular sport as an alternative activity to crime!

Manchester Communications Academy – a secondary school based in Harpurhey Manchester and part of the Greater Manchester Academies Trust. (North / SLIDACI: 1 / PLIDACI: 1)

What?

Youth crime is tearing through our communities with 27,000 children self-identified as gang members and a further 313,000 knowing someone in a gang prior to the pandemic, (Children's Commissioner, 2021). These increasing statistics are still an immediate problem within our communities today with half of under 16 stabbings occurring in the 4-6pm window of the school day.

So what?

A solution to tackling crime within children and young people is by finding a sense of belonging for these individuals so that the opportunity for this crime to occur is removed. Manchester Communications Academy have invested into solving this problem by working with local community groups to create 24-hour access of their school facilities to provide a continuous safe space for children and young people to attend. In a new initiative, this school have offered their facilities to clubs within their local community free of charge in agreement to house 50% of their attendees to pupils from the school per club. This agreement not only provides pupils with a range of co-curricular activities to select from but also offers specialist instructors to resource each activity, a safe environment for pupils to access physical activity whilst preventing from children from feeling isolated after school and resulting to crime.

To build these activities into pupil's weeks, the Academy outlines an expectation that pupils must attend two co-curricular activities a week to encourage an appetite for further attendance.

Now what?

This initiative highlights the importance of collaboration within the community, bringing clubs together to tackle inactive pupils whilst developing a lifelong passion for physical activity by integrating regular participation into their daily lives. Secondary schools can adopt a similar approach by:

1. Identifying their current School Games Organiser who can connect each school with local clubs and organisations that can deliver co-curricular activities within the timetable.
2. Seek support from the Opening Facilities Fund to upskill current facilities to build safe learning environments for activities both inside and outside of the school timetable.
3. Consider adding expectations for pupils to attend co-curricular activities to create lifelong habits within pupil's daily lives.

Children's Commissioner (2021) 'Children will keep dying on our streets until there is a joined up public health response to gangs'. [Accessed 16/08/23]

CNN Health (2018) 'Children have the highest risk of being stabbed on the way home from school, study finds'. [Accessed 16/08/23]