



Drugs a greater risk to children than knives, say parents

- *Team sports could reduce anti-social & illegal activities, but two-fifths of youths never take part according to new research*
- *Police support 'Peace at the Crease' scheme to reduce youth crime*

Drug abuse is the biggest worry for parents of schoolchildren in Britain, with 10 times as many fearing their children will become involved with drugs than knives.

Despite the frequent news stories of knife crime, only 4% of parents put this at the top of their list of concerns for their children with the majority (42%) saying drugs are their main fear.

One area where parents are united is in their belief that sport can divert children away from such negative activities: nine out of 10 of those surveyed agree that playing team sport can reduce the risk of schoolchildren getting caught up in anti-social or illegal activity.

However, the survey of 1,022 parents¹, commissioned by the partners of the StreetChance supported by Barclays Spaces for Sports initiative, found that a quarter of 8 to 18-year-olds never take part in a team sport with the figure rising dramatically to 40% among 16 to 18-year-olds.

StreetChance is a partnership between the Cricket Foundation, Barclays Spaces for Sports, Cricket for Change and the Metropolitan Police Service. It is delivered across 15 boroughs of London² and uses cricket to engage young people from a range of backgrounds in areas affected by youth crime and anti-social behaviour.

"Peace at the Crease" events will take place throughout the summer with Metropolitan Police officers joining young people in tape-ball cricket sessions to help break down barriers and address issues concerning them; from street safety, stop and search and bullying to anti-social behaviour, drug abuse, knife and gun crime.

MPS Inspector Mark Johnson backs the scheme and says, "Cricket is a team sport and a great tool for breaking down barriers with young people. Everyone's involved, batting and bowling, and immediately the children and officers interact with one another. Later in the project we can introduce more diversionary tactics. It's very much led by the young people and we'll listen to any issues concerning them."

Other highlights of the StreetChance survey include:

- Over half of mums and dads (57%) believe their children may have taken part in illegal or anti-social behaviour, from drug and alcohol use to vandalism, crime and violence;
- Three-quarters of parents (78%) think young people are more at risk of becoming involved in anti-social or illegal activities compared to when they were young;
- Majority of parents polled say they were mainly exposed to alcohol when they were young (52%) and only a fifth say drugs were an issue (20%);
- Two fifths of parents (40%) say they are equally worried about their child's job prospects and potential involvement in anti-social activities;
- Nearly half of parents surveyed (47%) say they are 'concerned' about the general outlook for today's young people.

StreetChance was launched in July 2008 by MPS Commissioner Sir Paul Stephenson and, through cricket sessions in schools and community venues, it reached over 7,000 youngsters in its first full year.

At weekly community sessions young people aged eight to 18 play 'Street20' cricket – a lightning quick version of the game, with each 20-ball innings lasting around 20 minutes. The traditional leather ball is replaced with a tape ball, a tennis ball wrapped in electrical tape, allowing games to be played on hard court areas in schools and estates. For more details on StreetChance visit www.streetchance.co.uk

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Notes to editor

1. Tickbox.net/Opinion Matters questioned a representative sample of 1,022 parents of children aged 8-18 between 27th July 2010 and 3rd August 2010.

2. Barking & Dagenham, Brent, Croydon, Hackney, Haringey, Hounslow, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Wandsworth.

About StreetChance partners

The Cricket Foundation

StreetChance is an extension of The Cricket Foundation charity's Chance to Shine model for inner-city areas, providing 25 hours of professional cricket coaching and competition during the summer term. Chance to Shine is the charity's campaign to regenerate competitive cricket in state schools. It is one of the single biggest sports development programmes ever seen in this country. It aims to educate state school children through cricket by establishing high-quality, sustainable cricket-led educational programmes in a third of all UK state schools by 2015.

Barclays Spaces for Sports

Barclays Spaces for Sports is a community sports programme using sport to revitalise disadvantaged communities in countries around the world where Barclays operates. It was launched in the UK in 2004 and has delivered 200 sustainable sports sites, giving more than half a million people in disadvantaged communities the opportunity to benefit. Following its success in the UK the programme was extended globally in 2008, bringing the total investment by Barclays to more than £37m. Additional investment of more than £30m from our partners the Football Foundation brings the overall total to more than £67m. Sites and projects are already established in South Africa, the United States, Spain and Zambia. Barclays Spaces for Sports is part of Barclays global community programme which invested £54.9m across 31 countries in 2009. To find out more visit www.barclays.com/community/spacesforsports

Cricket for Change

Cricket for Change has delivered Street 20 cricket over the past three years in projects in Jamaica, Sri Lanka, South Africa and London. Street 20 is a version of cricket developed by Cricket for Change. It has its roots in Pakistan where it is called tape-ball Cricket. The significant features of Street 20 are its speed, its ability to be played almost anywhere with very limited equipment, and its use of a tennis ball bound with tape. Cricket for Change has recently changed its name from the LCCA, which has over 25 years experience of using cricket to help disadvantaged young people. Targeting housing estates in deprived areas in London, Street 20 has been supported by Metropolitan Police units, including the Tactical Support Group (TSG) and Hackney Police.

The Metropolitan Police Service

The Metropolitan Police Service is committed to working with young people to make London safer. This project follows MPS involvement with other sports initiatives such as Kickz and Met-track which provide an added opportunity for police officers to meet with young people regularly and talk to them about crime and safety issues. Through investment in such projects the MPS aims to further develop confidence and trust between police and young people. The MPS has recently launched (29 July 2010) a new website aimed at young people (11-16) giving advice and information on a range of issues from bullying and drugs to gun and knife crime. Visit www.safe.met.police.uk