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**Summary of ‘Sport for Stronger Communities’ research report**

The GLA has recently published and distributed research compiled by thinkBeyond in partnership with Loughborough University London. The abridged research is brought together from academic research and mostly from British-based practitioners, combined with six case studies from international organisations/projects.

The central focus of the report is to showcase ways that sport can be used as a powerful social weaving instrument, bringing communities and individuals together to create a socially inclusive, equal and fair environment for people to thrive in. Further, the report highlights how sport can make an impact in the community using the ‘bottom up’ investment approach (e.g., using Asset-Based Community Development).

For those who are starved of time to read through the report in greater detail, pages 36 and 37 summarises research findings and highlights the following five critical success factors to make projects effective for social integration:

1. Collaboration and co-creation
2. People
3. Spaces and activity
4. Quality not quantity, measured over time
5. Sport with (non-traditional activities)

The abovementioned five critical success factors complement with the Mayor of London’s framework for social integration of equality, participation and relationships. Further information about the GLA’s model is found in page 37 of the research report.

**Key approaches and learnings for us to consider**

After digesting the contents of the report, there are plenty of rich examples to draw from. However, the following points are specific learnings and approaches that may be useful for us to consider when working with partners and/or creating future projects in London:

1. **Use the ‘bottom up’ investment approach** (i.e., Asset-Based Community Development) on all work we do within the community. This approach would give people the chance to get involved and lead on things that matter the most to their communities.
2. **Make all projects or programmes quality-focused** to support fewer people, as opposed to quantity-focused, to create deeper and longer-lasting community impact for sustainability purposes.
3. **In connection to quality for social integration projects or programmes, funders would need to shift their mindset from quantity to focus more on quality**. The key focus is not on what the funder wants, but more on how we have changed individuals’ lives.
4. **To make social integration effective, a longitudinal, inter-language learning and multi-phased approach would help bring multiple communities together**. The multi-phased approach starts from light-touch engagement, deeper relationship building, trust building and exchanges, to leadership and empowerment to help foster strong community relationships. Further, the inter-language approach aims to help various communities understand each other’s languages, cultures and faiths to make the social bonding glue work effectively.
5. **Integrate social values into the game when working within challenging communities**, rather than use sport alone as a vehicle for change. This approach is done by getting activity participants from various teams to collectively create rules at the outset of an activity, to focus on society and the challenges they face and relate it to the activity they participate in.

1. **Combine sport with non-traditional activities** such as food, arts, music and culture when working within communities, not just focus predominantly on sport.
2. **Combine volunteering and sport to support and serve the needs of a local community**, in particular older adults, where social isolation and loneliness is high in a dynamic, everchanging and fleeting population.

**Link to research report:** <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sport_for_stronger_communities_digital_version_1.4.19.pdf>

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