



THE EXPERIENCE OF THE **CORONAVIRUS** LOCKDOWN

IN LOW-INCOME AREAS OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

It is understood that those in lower income households have acutely felt the impact of the pandemic and lockdown both economically and in terms of mental and physical wellbeing.

During April and May 2020, some 270 community organizations that are based in the most deprived areas of England and Wales, and 188 young people who live in those neighbourhoods, shared their experiences, worries and opinions about life during and after the Covid lockdown. These community organizations are trusted in their neighbourhoods and work with StreetGames to support young disadvantaged people to adopt a healthy and active lifestyle. StreetGames calls them 'Locally Trusted Organisations' (LTOs).

In many instances LTOs have become the first port of call for families who are struggling to cope with the crisis, and this has placed additional burdens on LTOs' time and resources. Despite this, they are doing everything in their power to support young people and their families through lockdown, adapting their provision and expanding their remit to support whole families and older people rather than just children and youth.

Young peoples' experience of lockdown

- Home conditions during lockdown are often challenging for low income households, with young people trapped in overcrowded housing, with limited private space, and reduced access to normal support structures.
- Lockdown has damaged young people's social lives with 77% of them citing their inability to socialize with friends and family as their biggest concern. They miss their friends and having someone to talk to and somewhere to go.
- More than two-thirds say their activity rates have dropped, while just 16% say they are now more active. Still, 45% say they are missing taking part in sport and 20% say they are missing competition.
- Both lockdown and fears around the virus are driving forces for deteriorating mental health and wellbeing amongst young people and their families. Increased stress and family tension is also having a detrimental impact on mental wellbeing.
- A lack of structure has left young people struggling to cope with their daily lives, staying up late and sleeping in.
- Young people are often very short of activity kits, from board games to footballs. Many do not always have internet access.

Adapting to support people through Coronavirus

In many instances, LTOs have expanded from supporting young people to a more holistic role supporting entire families. LTOs are playing a major role in supporting parents and families to navigate the authorities through lockdown: phoning schools to organize laptops/meal vouchers; phoning social services and delivering food parcels and other supplies.

Much work has moved online, with LTOs innovating new ways to keep young people engaged and active. Many LTOs are monitoring their participants remotely, calling the young people once a week, but the most vulnerable 2 or 3 times a week.

Pressures on LTOs through the crisis and beyond

The additional responsibilities taken on by LTOs through this crisis period has placed significant burdens on them financially and organizationally. Funding is a major source of concern. There are many small grant opportunities (with £500 ceilings) but it is very hard to secure the larger sums needed to guarantee long-term survival.

LTOs are concerned about their staff – with some staff having to be furloughed or leaving casual, often self-employed staff without income. More than a quarter of LTOs surveyed have been forced to cease activities as a result of furloughs and building closures.

Key requirements for LTOs to survive and thrive both during lockdown and afterwards

LTOs need direct investment and help to fundraise.

LTOs need opportunities to share ideas and approaches to supporting LSEG youth, families, and communities through the lockdown.

LTOs need space to be listened to, to be informed and provided with practical and personal support.

LTOs need national and local level advocacy to enhance the appreciation of the power of these organisations to reactivate neighbourhoods and harvest multiple social values.

LTOs need training and support for staff and volunteers. New skills are needed to respond to the new crisis – such as a greater awareness of mental health issues and strategies to encourage families to leave their house and trust exercising in public space.