

A young man is seen from the back, wearing a white t-shirt with the words "STREET ELITE" printed in bold black letters. He is holding a white soccer ball with his left arm. He is standing on a green grassy field. In the background, there is a blurred soccer goal and another person in a green shirt. The overall scene is outdoors during the day.

STREET ELITE

Street Elite
Training
for work through
sport



Opposite: Year 3 Street Elite graduates with Ian Wright at the Westway Festival, Shepherds Bush.

What is Street Elite?

Street Elite is a training for work initiative. It uses sport, mentoring and youth engagement to motivate young people who are currently not in education, employment or training (NEET). The programme offers intensive support to those often living on the edge of gangs and criminality, helping them gain the confidence and skills to get a job or go on to further and higher education. It is delivered by the Change Foundation and the Berkeley Foundation.

How does it work?

Street Elite is a nine month programme. Initially, it involves a 12 week sports-based training and mentoring scheme. Young people gain insights into the Sport for Development industry, recognised accredited qualifications, and the personal skills and motivation to get their lives back on track. Next, they test the skills they have learnt by delivering sports sessions on local housing estates over a period of 6-8 weeks. Then, they help to organise a one day sports festival, involving dozens of local schools and hundreds of young people in a borough-wide event. Finally, they are offered work placements and support to enter education, employment or training.

This Toolkit

This document explains the delivery of Street Elite. It delves into the experience of coaches and participants and draws on an independent evaluation by researchers from Oxford Brookes University which has been running since the programme began. Our aim is to draw out the lessons and ideas which could help other organisations working with similar young people. We want to share the methodology. Above all, we want to communicate three ideas:

- Sport is a fantastic platform for engaging hard to reach young women and men: it can tackle exclusion and address the issue of employability.
- Intensive personal support is crucial: you will not make an impact with this group through short-term or light-touch interventions.
- The quality of coaches and mentors is fundamental: you have to invest in good youth workers.

‘Sport is a fantastic platform for engaging hard to reach young people.’





Who is Street Elite for?

Opposite: The East cohort in training at Tower Hamlets.

There are 955,000 16-24 year olds classified as NEET in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics (August 2014). Over 100,000 young people in London alone are not in education, employment or training.

You can divide this group broadly into three categories: the majority are short-term unemployed – they are available and looking for work; a small minority are directly involved in gangs and crime, requiring highly targeted, individual interventions. In between are a significant number of disengaged, excluded young people: often they are not in the benefits system; there is no public agency responsible for them; and they are at risk of long-term unemployment with its likely impact on their health, income and life chances. These are the young people Street Elite helps.

This group includes young women as well as young men. In fact, a majority of the nearly one million NEETs are women, not men. The ONS figures suggest that 52,000 more young women than men are not in education, employment or training. This may be a result of benefit reforms which aim to encourage single mothers with children over five to take jobs by paying them Jobseeker's Allowance instead of Income Support, meaning they are counted as unemployed.

Street Elite has been launched in London but there is nothing special about the geography or culture of this city when it comes to being NEET. Young people living on the edge of gangs and crime in any British town or city face similar challenges in their personal relationships, in the education system and in the labour market. The value of sport as a form of training for work also holds true in almost any setting.



The Programme

Opposite: Participants
in training at the Phoenix
Fitness Centre, White City.

Street Elite is structured and delivered in five phases:

1. Recruitment

Between October and December the Street Elite cohorts are identified and recruited, mostly face to face, with some referrals from councils, youth offending teams and other youth charities. The programme operates in locations within individual boroughs which face serious deprivation. The coaches then work tirelessly to engage and recruit the right people.

How to do it?

- Recruit hard – to reach the ‘hard to reach’, you need to be prepared to graft. We walk around estates and talk to them directly.
- Build partnerships – whether they are charities, government schemes, youth offending teams or independent groups, connect with as many as you can.
- Secure buy in from the council – it can take a while but they have a strategic commissioning role and can give you political support.
- Keep the message clear – it’s important to be simple about the structure of the programme and highlight the incentives: it’s easier to engage young people when they are getting something good for nothing.
- Service your partners well – any person or group that helps recruit a young person should be included and acknowledged in their development, not just at the recruitment phase, but throughout the year.

Opposite: Participants in training at Kings Hall Leisure Centre, Hackney.

2. Training and Mentoring

Once recruited, the Street Elite participants begin a crucial phase of the programme. The intensity of regular contact, empowering the group and simply listening, helps motivate them to reach the next stage of their development. Trust, fun and understanding give the individuals the security they need to continue. The sessions are a commitment of two hours a week. This allows them to be part of other training courses and to be in the Job Centre system, instead of trying to engage them on a 9 to 5 basis.

‘They are not hard to reach if they show up 9 to 5—we work with the hard core and they are not up at 9. They are up to no good.’



How to do it?

- Never ever let them down – the Coach Mentors set the standard for the group and act as role models. If you miss a day or a call, the whole thing can break down. You must always be on time. You must ensure you keep your promises and establish some boundaries from the outset.
- Use incentives – reward helps signify achievement and transition. Giving them incentives even when they have not fully deserved it can help development.
- Full time communication – all forms of regular communication are crucial: Whatsapp, phone, text, email and letters. Constant reminders and being ‘on call’ are fundamental. If you show them commitment, in time they return it.
- Blind learning – mixing life messages with fun sporting activity and discussions is the key to training. They think they are having a general discussion about the transfer of a premiership football player but in fact it is an analogy about the consequences of dealing drugs. The team call these moments ‘blind learning’ when the Street Elite don’t realise they have grasped something until you point it out to them later in their journey alongside the change in their behaviour.
- Patience is key – young people will let you down, they will make mistakes and they will push you as far as they can. Provide realistic space, time and guidance for most eventualities. You need patience while you slowly earn their respect.

- Moments of exchange – through debates, discussion and relationship building, the coaches uncover the real life stories behind each person. These moments of exchange draw the group together. They begin to listen to one another, often change their opinions and work through challenges and differences. A memorable debate about the suicide of footballer Gary Speed was a key moment for one cohort. The group stayed behind for two hours after the session experiencing a range of emotions as a group; sadness, anger, frustration, grief and growth.
- Listen and be there – avoid trying to say that you can relate to all of their problems because you’ve ‘been through it’. It’s about them and not you. Be consistent in your manner and communication, but don’t offer counselling. There are others better qualified to do this.

‘They think they are having a general discussion about the transfer of a premiership football player but in fact it is an analogy about the consequences of dealing drugs. The team call these moments “blind learning”.’

3. Community Engagement

After the training phase, the Street Elite begin running community sports sessions on local estates, testing their skills and confidence. The estates are chosen by the participants themselves.

How to do it?

- Preparing the Street Elite team to deliver sports sessions on local housing estates is a big step forward. It involves selling in the idea of giving back to the community and represents a significant test of their skills and confidence.
- When you identify estates, it is fundamental they are part of the selection process. *‘They know their areas, they know where they don’t want to go, where they’re not safe. It’s got to be tailored to making them feel comfortable to deliver.’*

‘We mix up the characters, some have experience of coaching and some have a natural ability to engage young people.’





Opposite: Delivering dance lessons at Burgess Park, Southwark.

- The groups are divided up based on their personalities. This gives them the best chance of succeeding in outreach work. *'We mix up the characters, some have experience of coaching and some have a natural ability to engage young people'.*
- Different mindset – different image. The Street Elite are returning to their communities with a new mindset and image. *'They are going into their community where they may already be known for negative reasons – seen in gangs, meat wagons, with guns – now they're going back in a tracksuit in coaching gear connecting with young people.'*
- Sustainability – these sessions should link in with local sports providers and help signpost the young people on the estate towards long-term sporting activities once the training is over. Building relationships with parents as well as the young people helps to achieve this.

Opposite: Street Elite festival
at Gurnell Leisure Centre, Ealing.

4. Showcasing their skills

The training culminates in a series of half day sports festivals. One takes place in each of the boroughs where the programme operates. Each festival involves 6-10 schools and up to 300 pupils who try out a whole range of different sports – from cricket to boxing, and dance to rowing. The events celebrate what the Street Elite have achieved so far. They help deliver the festival, working alongside their coaches and staff from the Berkeley Group, and demonstrate all the skills they have learned. The festivals also provide an opportunity for the programme to engage with local politicians and connect with Youth Services and referral agencies in local government.

‘This is without doubt the best organised event we’ve been to, such an amazing format for our children.’

Lisa Povey, St George’s School, Battersea





Opposite: Girls learn boxing at a Street Elite festival in Millfields Park, Hackney.

How to do it?

- Using a local park is fine. This doesn't need lots of facilities. Choose a park in a setting the Street Elite can identify with, the kind of place they grew up. It helps them feel like they're connected and giving back to their community.
- Create a target list of potential funders, key stakeholders and future employers. Engage with them early on and make sure there is a dedicated team on hand to talk them through the programme. Chase the schools relentlessly and expect drop outs the week before.
- Get away from the stereotypes we're familiar with in sport. Get the girls doing boxing, and the boys involved in dancing.
- Make sure the coach mentors are available on the day. Their side of the story is just as important as the Street Elite graduates'. They can also act as a reference if potential employers are visiting.
- Give it some buzz. A DJ will liven up the atmosphere.



Opposite: Irfan Ayub. Street Elite graduate and now full time employee on Berkeley's Woodberry Down site.

5. Employment

Getting a job is one of the constant themes of the programme. Many of the participants don't come on Street Elite for their own good. They need money and they recognise this might be a safer, more reliable way to get it. Every person who gets to this stage of the programme is guaranteed a 2 week work placement with an allowance for travel, breakfast and lunch. Sometimes this leads straight to a job. Many people go on to further or higher education.

How to do it?

- Set realistic expectations – if you commit to Street Elite and perform during the work placement, you have a realistic chance of full time work: the targets are clear, tangible and honest.
- Partner with a business – the value of having a company like Berkeley Group involved is that you can offer a credible journey to paid employment. In this case, Berkeley staff visit the initial training and explain what their industry is like; they set up a site visit later to bring this alive; and then guarantee a placement for anyone that completes every stage of the programme.

Opposite: Street Elite graduates Sully and Irfan are in the front row, second from the left. They are now full time employees on Berkeley Group sites.

- Work in stages – some of the NEETs may find the prospect of starting a new job daunting; equally, the employer taking them on doesn't know what to expect. It works well to start the process by doing a taster visit (for a couple of hours) before the placement begins.
- Organise an Employability Day – job readiness is important. Street Elite includes a day covering interview techniques, presentation style, top tips for employment, CV writing and some career guidance.
- Education = Employment. Going on to college or university is equally valuable. Just going through a UCAS form as an exercise can reset their aspirations and help them think of university as an achievable goal.
- Whatever they decide to do, encourage continued mentoring. Often the coaches join the first interviews or first day on a placement to make sure the Street Elite graduate physically attends. Identify someone who can sit down with them on a monthly basis and review how they are getting on.





Measuring Impact

Opposite: Perry Sophocleous, Street Elite coach with the East London cohort.

We use multiple measures to capture the learning and impact of the programme. We use a series of tools that build a case file on each young person: questionnaires, progress reports, coaching diaries, employment log sheets and one to one interviews. Qualitative data is analysed to identify emerging themes in the responses. Researchers from Oxford Brookes University also provide an independent evaluation of Street Elite each year.

Hard outcomes

- After 3 years, nearly 80% of participants on Street Elite have gone from NEET to EET.
- Of the 65 participants in year 3, 52 completed the programme.
- 100% of participants so far have secured accredited sports qualifications.

Opposite: Pupils at a Street Elite festival in Wandsworth.

Soft outcomes

In Year 2:

- Every participant reported feeling an increased sense of confidence in themselves and their abilities.
- Coaching diaries show that 100% of participants have improved their communication skills through contributions to discussions at training sessions, replying to text messages, sending unprompted whatsapp messages and answering the phone more regularly.
- 61% of participants attended at least one Street Elite festival, demonstrating an improved sense of physical motivation; 39% were already back into employment, education or training at this stage.
- Participant case studies show increased aspirations and heightened self-belief, evidenced by their ability to set achievable goals.
- An average 90% attendance rate was achieved across all training sessions, demonstrating personal commitment and increased reliability.



The Cost

Opposite: Every Street Elite participant is given a branded sports kit.

Street Elite represents excellent value for money. The cost per participant to go through the nine month programme is currently £2,678. This is inclusive of staff delivery, administration and development time, long term mentoring, accredited qualifications in sport, 'on the job' work experience, a support unit and incentives which all result in the successful move into education, employment or training (EET). For comparison, the Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board suggests that a place in a Young Offender Institution costs £65,000 for one year.

Expenditure is focused on:

- The quality of staffing. 59% of the budget is invested in coaches and mentoring. It's their dedication, experience and time that provides the Street Elite with the kind of intense, tailored support they need.
- Incentives. The participants get paid £15 each time they turn up. This represents 13% of our budget. It covers the cost of their travel, and helps signify reward when they show commitment.

Opposite: Artie McDonagh,
Year 2 Street Elite graduate
from West London.

- Making it local. We find local training grounds for every borough in which we recruit. 4% of our budget pays for sports halls that are easy and accessible for the young people to get to. It also gives them options if they have previously been involved in gang culture and have issues stepping outside of 'their turf.'
- Kitting up. We provide every individual with branded Street Elite sports kit to wear. This helps them to recognise their transformation and feel their identity as part of the programme.
- Showcasing. The Street Elite Festivals cost 5% of our budget and serve two important purposes: first, they help showcase the new coaching skills of the Street Elite and secondly, they cement relationships with key stakeholders, referral agencies and potential funders.
- Cutting red tape. Just 9% of our budget goes on overheads.
- Measuring and evaluating. 5% of our budget is spent assessing the programme. This covers the Oxford Brookes independent evaluation, as well as the analysis by the Change Foundation.





Opposite: The Street Elite team and Berkeley Foundation meet Mayor Jules Pipe, Hackney Council.

The Partnership

Street Elite is delivered through a partnership between the Change Foundation and Berkeley Foundation.

Change Foundation Set up in the wake of the 1981 Brixton Riots, the Change Foundation is an award winning UK based charity which has been using the game of cricket to change the lives of disadvantaged young people in London, the UK and across the world for over 30 years. Through long term, strategically focused sports programmes, it tackles the social issues associated with gang culture and lack of self esteem and helps disengaged young people become a source of pride to their families, their communities and themselves.

The Berkeley Foundation is a registered charity set up by the Berkeley Group. It supports young people and their communities across London and the South of England through charitable donations and the talent and time of Berkeley Group staff. In the last three years the charity has committed over £5 million to over 60 charities and worthy causes. Its Job Creation Programme helped 250 unemployed people into work in 2013/14.

This partnership provides each participant in Street Elite with a strong unit of support to give them the maximum opportunity to succeed. Most young adults join the programme with a desire to build a positive future. But realistically, they are not mentally, physically or financially ready to begin this journey. It requires a massive investment of time and patience to help them begin to commit to their own development. The support is provided by:

- A Programme Manager – who is key in the first face to face meeting with each participant, oversees delivery, keeps the messages clear, and builds a foundation of trust and respect for everyone involved.
- Coach Mentors – the most pivotal role in terms of building relationships and facilitating the growth of individuals. Mentoring by passionate and unique coaches is what makes engagement last.
- Peer Mentors – Street Elite graduates from previous years come back to assist in sessions and naturally relate to the new recruits on the programme. Their relationship is built on shared experiences and proves to participants that success really exists.
- Personal Circle – the Street Elite come from a diverse range of backgrounds and bring with them a complex range of issues. It is equally important that friends, families, career advisors and referral agencies are all part of their development.





Name: Brett Grace
Age: 25
Cohort: Hackney
Coach: Perry Sophocleous

‘I had a tenner to my name four months ago which had to be spent on my son’s school dinners for the week. Now I’m picking him up from school in my suit.’

Brett had spent time in prison on more than one occasion. He grew up on the Alfred Estate in Bow and got involved in anti-social behaviour and violence. He has a son and was desperately trying to get some traction with his life. He was all set to start the programme but ended up back in prison due to a previous offence. On release he got in touch and wanted to start straight away. Brett acquired a child protection certificate during his first week. It was his first real qualification. He was bouncing off the walls with excitement. He said he would do anything required of him to catch up and learn more. During the estates delivery phase, Brett coached next door to the shop where he got involved in the fight protecting his brother, after which he’d ended up in prison for 8 months. It was a huge personal step forward. Five months later, he completed a work placement and is now an assistant site manager with Berkeley on a construction site in Aldgate. He finally has some stability and can support his family.

How and why did you get involved?

I got involved in Street Elite through a close friend of the family. I had just came out of prison and needed to change my life around. I'd never been a big fan of sports but occasionally played football with friends.

What do your friends and family think?

People around me as in friends and family are proud of the journey I've been on and the person I've become. The programme combines sports with learning which makes the process run a lot smoother and keeps people's attention in every session. I believe it's a great way of doing things.

What difference has Street Elite made to your life?

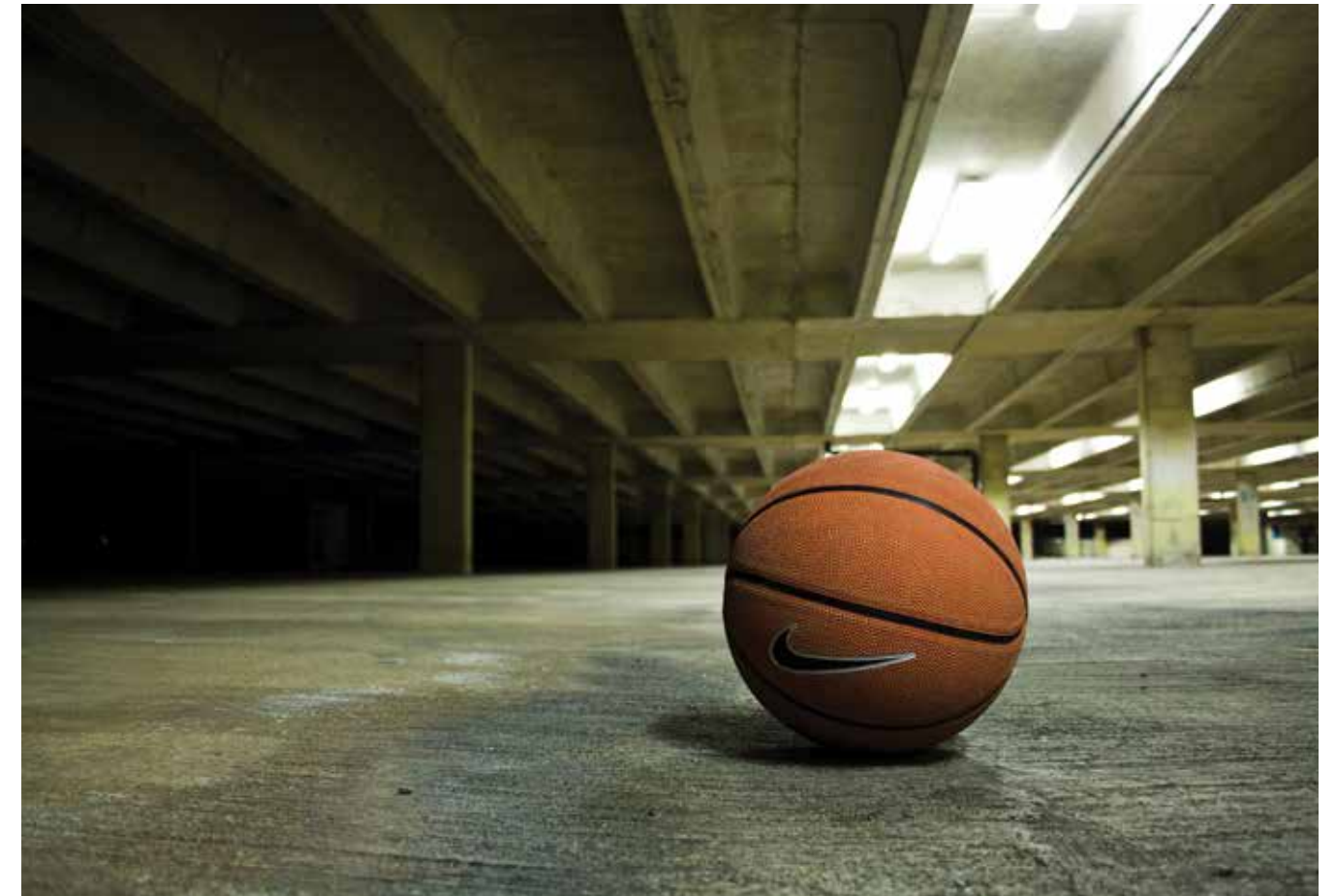
Without Street Elite I wouldn't have a full time job right now. In all honesty, I'd be at home playing computer games, living on pennies and not being able to afford to give me and my family the life we deserve.

What are your ambitions for the future?

In the next 5 years I plan on being a Site Manager with Berkeley and progressing onto bigger and better things. Aiming to climb the ladder from the bottom to the top of my ambitions and dreams.

If you could sum up your Street Elite experience in 5 words, what would they be?

One off life changing opportunity.





Name: Carwayne Watt
Age: 23
Cohort: Girls
Coach: Beth Evans

Opposite: Carwayne on the right,
at a Street Elite festival.

**‘They are proud. I am too. Don’t
think I’ve been proud before.’**

Carwayne was referred to Street Elite from the Croydon Youth Offending Team. She had recently been in prison for attempted import of drugs into the UK from the Caribbean. She served two and a half years and now wants to get her life back on track. We remember her arrival to the centre where the sessions take place. She walked into the office with a beaming smile asking for further information. On instinct, I immediately felt she had something to offer and a genuine interest in making a change. Her main fear was applying for jobs while inside because of being judged on her conviction. But she realised she wasn’t going to let that mistake hold her back. Carwayne is continually developing her public speaking skills and techniques in youth work. She is now the most positive and engaging member of the group. She has secured a place with Change Box, a youth work training consultancy. She has a bright future in youth work and will be a great asset as a peer mentor in the next Street Elite girl’s cohort.

How and why did you get involved?

I got involved with Street Elite through probation. It was recommended to me because previously they’ve asked me, what do I want to do now? I told them that I’ve always wanted to work with young people and that’s when they gave me the opportunity to get with Street Elite. I play sports at times like football and cricket. So I thought this sounds like I can combine both, and now I love the sports much more.

What do your friends and family think of your involvement?

My friends and families think it's a great opportunity for me to learn more and to take on a big responsibility and to keep me from negative people and my involvement with them. They are proud. I am too. Don't think I've been proud before.

What difference has Street Elite made to your life?

What I really enjoy about the programme is the outside activities and meeting other companies and different young people. Now I see there is more opportunities out there for me and others that are in the same situation as me, and more doors can get open for us.

What are your ambitions for the future?

My next ambition is to be running my own young people's club or youth work programme running workshops.

If you could sum up your street elite experiences in 5 words, what would they be?

It's hard for me to describe my experience in 5 words...I can't...I've had more opportunities, made me a lot more confident, be much more reliable, self motivated and a good team player. It's powerful.





Opposite: Rob Perrins, Managing Director of the Berkeley Group, at Wandsworth Street Elite festival.

Key Learnings

The experience of Street Elite demonstrates three key ideas about delivering a successful NEET initiative:

- 1. The power of sport.** Sport has the power to engage and transform. Sport makes people deal with success and failure, responsibility and accountability, commitment, teamwork and respect. These characteristics of sport make it a very effective medium for working with NEET young people. It acts as an 'ice breaker', allowing the journey of development to begin. Sport gives them a sense of belonging to a positive, collective environment.

At a strategic level, sport is a vehicle for social change. It can be either diversionary or developmental. It responds to many of the key societal issues we face such as mental health, obesity and criminal behaviour. What Street Elite reveals is the way that sport can help tackle one of the toughest parts of the NEET challenge. It can energise and inspire hard to reach young people and get them back into work or training.
- 2. Intensive personal support.** Most of the young people on Street Elite face huge personal, social, health and financial problems. It leaves them struggling to find the motivation and inner strength required to go from NEET to EET. The multiple issues they often face include substance abuse, gang activity, few positive role models, a lack of skills and qualifications, low aspirations and a catalogue of poor choices. Street Elite assumes that there is hidden potential in every young person and our job is to unlock it. But we recognise this takes time.

Opposite: Training session at Roehampton, South West London with Watford footballer, Fitz Hall.

You cannot make an impact with this group of people through short-term or light touch interventions. Street Elite lasts nine months. There is no magic to that number. What we have learnt is simply that it takes a long period of sustained, individual support to affect change. Funding and policy must reflect that.

3. **Mentoring.** Most successful people can remember a key person who took an interest in them at a crucial time in their life. The mentors on Street Elite are trained to be this person. They have to be non-judgemental and embrace different personalities and backgrounds. They need to be capable of showing loyalty and empathy through challenging times and understand that mentoring is more than just 'passing on wisdom' – it's the ability to offer supportive challenge.

Street Elite works because of the quality of the coaches. It involves sport but it's about mentoring and great youth work. Nearly half the budget is spent on the coaches and mentoring. Until that balance of investment is reflected more widely in how resources are allocated to tackle youth unemployment, the number of NEETs will remain stubbornly high. You have to invest in good youth work if you want to re-engage young people living on the edge of gangs and crime.



Opposite: Joanita, Jacqueline and Natasha, Year 3 graduates from the Women's cohort at the Wandsworth Festival.

Between 2013 and 2017, Street Elite will use sport and intensive mentoring to help 300 young people living on the edge of gangs and criminality transform their lives and secure employment. It will become a best practice model which shows how to use sport as a form of training for work and will influence policy and delivery across the sector.

The initiative will be run increasingly by the graduates themselves, with much of the training delivered by young people who have gone through the programme. As a result, Street Elite will earn a reputation as one of the best projects of its kind in the UK.

This success will be built on six unique characteristics:

- Intensive, tailored support and mentoring to NEET young people over a period of up to 9 months.
- Low numbers and high impact.
- Directly addressing individual motivation and long-term personal development.
- Easy to access, with a low initial commitment of 2 hours a week and the attraction of sport.
- Focusing hard on providing sustainable opportunities at the end of the programme, achieving exceptional conversion rates from 'NEET to EET'.
- Being highly cost-effective, with a current unit cost of £2,678 to get each young person through the programme.



This is a toolkit. It explains the delivery of Street Elite, a youth engagement programme supporting NEET young people. It delves into the experience of coaches and participants and draws out ideas which could help other organisations working with similar young people who live on the edge of gangs and crime.

www.street-elite.org

STREET ELITE

