



***Our Theory of Change:***  
*Exploring the role of Sport for Development  
in the prevention and desistance from crime*

*James Noble, New Philanthropy Capital*

*Justin Coleman, 2nd Chance Group (Secretariat – NASDC)*

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# **NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF SPORT**

## *For the Desistance of Crime*

The National Alliance of Sport for the Desistance of Crime (NASDC) was established in July 2015 by the 2nd Chance Group and with support from the Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Service, Clinks and Comic Relief.

NASDC is a voice for the power of sport and works strategically with key stakeholders across the criminal justice sector to support the development of best practice, policy and legislation relating to sport and desistance from crime.

NASDC is also fully committed to supporting and empowering its members who are people and groups who recognise the power of sport to transform the life circumstances of those caught up in a cycle of crime and imprisonment.

An appointed steering group meets on a quarterly basis to govern NASDC. It includes senior officials from the following organisations:





*James Mapstone, 2nd Chance Group*

## **FOREWORD**

The National Alliance of Sport for the Desistance of Crime was launched in October 2015. Its purpose is to advocate for its members and provide support and guidance to the wide range of stakeholders using the power of sport for the prevention and the desistance from crime.

As Chair, it has been a privilege to work alongside many great partners and supporters who've been equally as passionate about the power of sport and empowering some of the most complex and challenging individuals in our society.

As the name suggests; The Alliance aims to unite Sport for Development and the criminal justice system. All members work together to develop solutions, identify best practice and evidence the impact of sport on the desistance from crime, promoting the argument for further investment.

This Theory of Change will provide the much needed guidance required. We are also launching alongside it a programme of further training and support for members to ensure it is understood and utilised effectively.

I would like to thank James Noble at New Philanthropy Capital for leading on the project; Justin Coleman for pulling it all together and the Steering Group for your patience and support.

Finally thank you to the sector and service users for their honesty and passion in using the power of sport to tackle crime.



*"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all kinds of discrimination."*

**– Nelson Mandela, 25th May 2000**



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This sector-wide Theory of Change has been developed in response to the need to identify the role of sport in the prevention and desistance from crime.

It aims to improve the quality and consistency of programme delivery by empowering the Sport for Development (SfD) sector and the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to work together through a sector-wide methodology that harnesses the power of sport and facilitates specialised approaches whilst maintaining their individuality and uniqueness.

We have consulted a wide range of service users along with people and groups from both the SfD sector and the CJS across England and Wales. We have also started to gather and use academic research focusing on sport for the prevention and desistance from crime.

The output of the Theory of Change process is a diagram of hypotheses of what we believe is the role of sport in desistance from crime. We found there to be four broad **themes** around the benefits of sport which can be summarised as follows:

- ✦ **Distraction:** The simple argument is that by taking part in sport, people at risk are distracted from their involvement in anti-social behaviour and/or substance misuse.
- ✦ **Wellbeing:** The established physiological arguments are that physical activities improve health, wellbeing and mood.
- ✦ **Individual development:** There are a wide range of personal attributes that can be developed through sport, and which are enhanced through the sports coaching relationship.
- ✦ **Social and Community Development:** There are social benefits of taking part in sport with others.

An important part of the argument for sport is that it's **particularly effective at engaging people at risk of crime**. While some of this is due to the natural appeal of sport, we have also identified a range of quality factors and change processes that are likely to enhance this appeal; **making sure it is enjoyable, accessible, consistent and safe, and giving service users a sense of ownership or control over activities**.

The other important 'change process' identified is the quality of the coaching/mentoring relationship. Ideally, coaches and sport mentors will build trust, make people feel valued, and act as role models with the aim of building a platform to maximise the benefits of taking part in sport and community focused activity.

It is widely accepted that all of the above outcomes have positive effects on desistance from crime as well as other outcomes (employment, health etc.) that are also recognised pathways to desistance.


We hope that both practitioners and academics across SfD and CJS will use this Theory of Change to drive vision, strategic thinking and delivery of services that use sport and physical activity within their programmes.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document outlines NASDC's sector-wide Theory of Change for the role of sports and physical activity in helping people to move away from crime.

It is based on discussions and consultation with 69 organisations from England and Wales delivering sports interventions, 202 service users from England and Wales (in the community and criminal justice system), two events reaching 231 direct programme attendees from both the SfD and CJS sectors, and a brief overview of the current academic literature around sport and desistance from crime.

- ✦ **Sport England 2016 – 2021 Strategy (Towards an Active Nation)**  
[www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf](http://www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf)
- ✦ **Sport for Development Outcome Framework:** The Sport for Development Outcome and Measurement Framework has been developed by the Sport for Development Coalition's Technical Working Group, led by Dimitrios Tourountsis, Senior Manager, The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) and Emma Heel, Evidence, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, Sported.



*“A theory of change is a tool that shows an organisation’s path from needs, to activities, to quality outcomes, to impact. It describes the change you want to make and the steps involved in making that change happen. Theories of change also depict the assumptions that lie behind your reasoning, and where possible, these assumptions are backed up by evidence.”*

**– New Philanthropy Capital**





Across all of these sources we see a range of arguments for the benefits of sport – which are expressed in different ways, by different people, in different places. This document aims to distil and summarise the main arguments for sport, which we hope will:

1. **Make the overall argument for sport and desistance clearer and stronger;**
2. **Help us organise the existing empirical evidence about targeted sport in the community and sport in prisons;**
3. **Identify those instances where the evidence is less convincing and where further research is needed;**
4. **Equip practitioners to develop theories of change for specific sports programmes - using the concepts outlined here.**

The ultimate aim of the NASDC Theory of Change is to improve quality and results of programme delivery. The following key points enable a contextualisation of resilience-building through Sport for Development based interventions, and how to facilitate desistance from crime.

### What is resilience?

*“Resilience; the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties”*

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/resilience>

An ever growing body of evidence reveals that sport (and the introduction of positive roles models and enabling of social mobility) can have a pro-social impact and counter some of the typical after-effects of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) such as abuse, neglect or dysfunctional home environments.

There’s a significant amount of material on the importance of resilience within the context of crime and violence. For more information see:

- ✦ **World Health Organisation (ACE-IQ):**  
[www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/activities/adverse\\_childhood\\_experiences/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/activities/adverse_childhood_experiences/en/)
- ✦ **Ace’s Too High:**  
<https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/>

## What is desistance?

*"Desistance from crime; the long-term abstinence from criminal behaviour among those for whom offending had become a pattern of behaviour..."*

<http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/how-and-why-people-stop-offending-discovering-desistance>

Sport has a clear role within the desistance process, as, among many other things, it may enable improved social environments, structured occupational activity, physical and mental wellbeing, positive identity, education, training and employment opportunities, all of which can offer a platform to support desistance from crime.

Resources and materials also exist concerning desistance within the context of crime. For more information, see:

- ✚ **Discovering Desistance:** <http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/>

## Why focus on the prevention of crime and desistance from crime?

NASDC is focussed on supporting its members in and around sport's ability to prevent crime and to enhance desistance from crime. The impact of crime within our society is clearly evident:

*"...figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) show there were an estimated 6.8 million incidents of crime against households and resident adults (aged 16 and over) in England and Wales for the year ending March 2015..."*

[www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/2015-07-16](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/2015-07-16)

NASDC members and wider network are committed to using 'sport for good' to enable the prevention of crime and encourage desistance from crime.

For further evidence of the impact of sport on crime, please visit the 'NASDC Resource Library': [www.nasdc.org/our-work/resource-library/](http://www.nasdc.org/our-work/resource-library/)





## Our methodology over the first year

Our stages of development and the development of the NASDC Theory of Change:

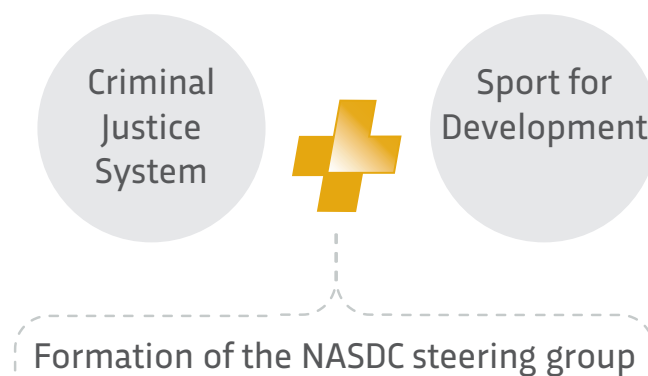
### National Alliance of Sport for the Desistance of Crime (NASDC)

**Chair: James Mapstone**

**Secretariat: Justin Coleman**

2nd Chance Group received funding in the form of a three-year grant from Comic Relief and a one-year development grant from the National Offender Management Services (supported by Clinks and the Ministry of Justice).

This enabled 2nd Chance to begin bringing together experts from across the Criminal Justice System and the SfD sector to begin the formation of the NASDC Steering Group:



**23rd September 2015:** NASDC Steering Group meeting confirmed that a structure for the Theory of Change and an identity for the 'Sector and Landscape' would be the first step towards driving the NASDC network towards a more visible and coordinated approach to tackling crime through sport.

**October 2015:** Formal launch of the NASDC at the Beyond Sport Summit and Awards in London. Lord McNally was announced as the NASDC's first ambassador and presented to the 146 special guests. The team gathered feedback and insight from key national and international figures in sport and criminal justice.

**October 2015 – April 2016:** Across England and Wales, NASDC led consultations with organisations, service users and providers focussing on three key questions:

1. To what extent and why is sport valuable to service users compared to other things?
2. What makes a good sports initiative within the context of preventing crime or increasing desistance?
3. What should the outcomes and deliverables of NASDC be?

**27th April 2016:** NASDC Steering Group worked on building key focus areas for the NASDC Theory of Change. Two groups reviewed the themes and ordered them under the headings 'Quality' and 'Mechanisms'. This then enabled the Steering Group to draw together the key themes and objects.

## How to interpret the Theory of Change

A theory of change aims to describe the intended outcomes for a social programme and how it will achieve them. It is inevitably something of an abstraction because it is impossible to represent the complexity of people's lives or the details of individual sports projects through a single diagram or series of explanations. Rather the aim is to highlight the broad arguments for sport in the justice system.

We also understand that all of the change processes and outcomes we outline in the Theory of Change could potentially support one another. For example, greater confidence drawn from a sense of achievement may make individuals and organisations more willing to collaborate with others. We have taken the view that it is not possible (or particularly useful) to represent all of these inter-relationships. This also reflects our understanding of causality in desistance: there is no one thing that needs to happen to help someone turn away from crime, nor one single journey. Rather, sports programmes work to facilitate and enable capacity building within individuals (around notions of resilience) and to promote positive momentum that can help people change their lives by way of making more positive life choices.

There is a risk to presenting a theory of change in this way, in that it might look too linear or simplistic. This is the opposite of what is intended. Rather we are saying that the value of sport is so complex and particular to individuals that the only way to summarise it authentically is on a more general level. The Theory of Change can be applied across a range of different contexts and services.

At this stage, the NASDC Theory of Change is based mainly upon practitioner and service user views. Ultimately we want the work to align with academic research. This will be explored in more detail during the delivery of the training that has been developed alongside this document.





## LANGUAGE USED IN THE THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of Change is a way to describe programmes or projects that are intended to have a positive impact on society. The process involves outlining the thinking behind a programme under a number of headings.

Context	The situation that people at risk of crime are in. Ideally including all aspects of individual capacities, interpersonal relationships, institutional setting and the wider infrastructural system.
Impact	The sustained long-term difference that projects are designed to help beneficiaries achieve.
Outcomes	The more immediate changes in beneficiaries that will contribute to impact. Outcomes are crucial because they are what programmes actually affect directly, and should be accountable for. For example, sporting projects do not stop crime, rather their aim is to provide beneficiaries with the resources, strengths and assets to do this themselves. Moreover, in desistance theory, outcomes happen incrementally; small improvements gradually lead to more substantial longer-term change.
Change process	The theory of <i>how</i> change occurs. What happens during beneficiaries' engagement with the project that brings about the outcomes above. This element is missing from a lot of theories of change but is critical to understanding and evaluation.
Activities and inputs	What projects actually do. As this is a sector-wide theory of change the aim is not to try to describe all the different types of sports projects that may be available. Rather we focus on defining <b>quality</b> , what makes a project 'good' and maximise the likelihood of prompting the change process we want.

## NASDC Theory of Change in order of behaviour change

The overview below of the NASDC Theory of Change has been ordered to represent the behavioural change within the client group. Each 'Focus Area' enhances the next, and each 'Measurement Title' is placed in order to maximise engagement and behavioural change. This is by no means a fixed structure; it is open for academics, practitioners, managers and funders to start debating and questioning it, as well as measuring current capacity and future plans. The overview demonstrates what power Sport for Development could have in tackling behavioural change.

Focus area	Measurement title	What do you want to deliver or how do you measure, capture and demonstrate this?
 <p><b>Engagement</b> Stages of Behaviour Change</p>	<p><i>Involved in negative activity</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre-contemplation (disengaged/survival) <b>"Not on my radar"</b></li> <li>2. Contemplation (not engaged/safety) <b>"Thinking about it"</b></li> <li>3. Preparation (almost engaged/belonging) <b>"Planning to do something about it soon"</b></li> <li>4. Action (engaged/Importance) <b>"Getting started"</b></li> <li>5. Maintenance (highly engaged/self-actualisation) <b>"Sticking with it"</b></li> </ol> <p><i>Active Desistance</i></p>	<p><i>Involved in negative activity</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol> <p><i>Active Desistance</i></p>
 <p><b>Physical and Mental Wellbeing</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Physical health</li> <li>2. Healthy lifestyles</li> <li>3. Mood/increased wellbeing</li> <li>4. Sense of release</li> <li>5. Safeguarding self and others</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol>
 <p><b>Individual Development</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased take-up (sport and activity)</li> <li>2. Increased motivation</li> <li>3. Managing emotions</li> <li>4. Resilience</li> <li>5. Self-esteem</li> <li>6. Self-efficacy</li> <li>7. Positive identity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> <li>7.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Pathways into Education and Training</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New skills</li> <li>2. Progression into education</li> <li>3. Progression into employment</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> </ol>
 <p><b>Social and Community Development</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved social skills</li> <li>2. Improved peer/friendship groups</li> <li>3. Improved opportunities</li> <li>4. Ability to represent and promote purposeful service user voice (Prison Council, Youth Councils etc.)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> </ol>

# IMPACT

Defining the impact part of the Theory of Change is the easiest part: it is **desistance from crime**.

Sports projects may also contribute to other impacts. For example:

- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved attitudes to learning and attendance in school
- Improved educational attainment and achieving qualifications
- Enhanced career prospects
- Reduced substance misuse
- Positive parenting

However, as the purpose of this Theory of Change is to focus on desistance, these other impacts are only considered for their *contribution to desistance*.

There is a strong precedent for this argument. Many of the outcomes above are part of the established "seven pathways" to reducing reoffending.\*



\* <http://prisonlinks.co.uk/the-7-pathways-to-reduce-reoffending/>

# OUTCOMES

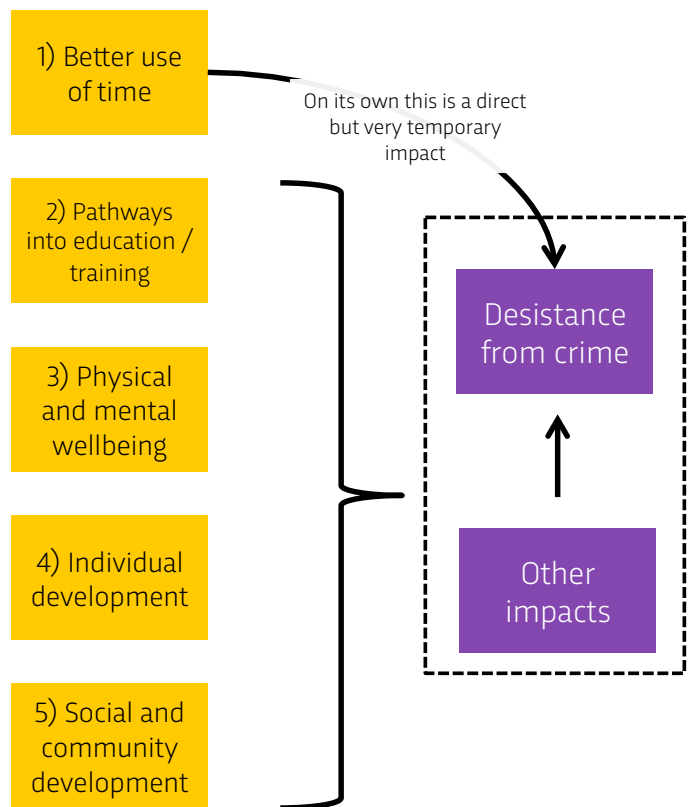
All of the outcomes mentioned by practitioners and service users can be grouped under these five headings.

The first two arguments are different from the others:

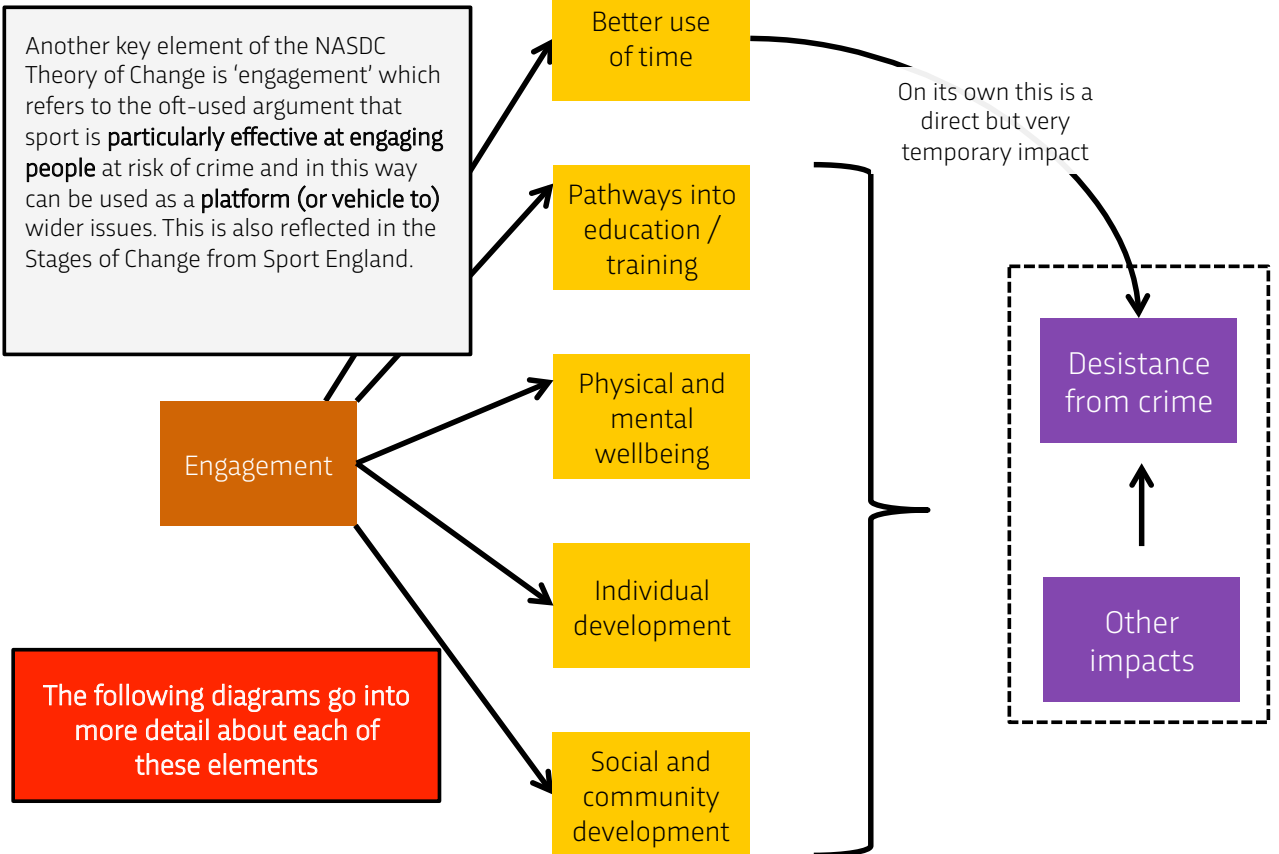
- The first relates to the most straightforward argument; that by engaging in sport, people at risk of crime are otherwise engaged. This is why community projects tend to be run at times like Friday nights.
- The second argument is also straightforward; sometimes people gain access to education and training opportunities through sport and/or through sport-based projects. For example they might train as a coach.

The remaining three outcome groupings (3-5) are much more complex. The language is drawn from Sport England's strategy (p9), with two differences; a) we have combined 'physical' and 'mental' wellbeing; b) we have excluded 'economic development' (which seems less relevant to desistance).

Much of the rest of this document focuses on unpacking the arguments under headings 3-5.

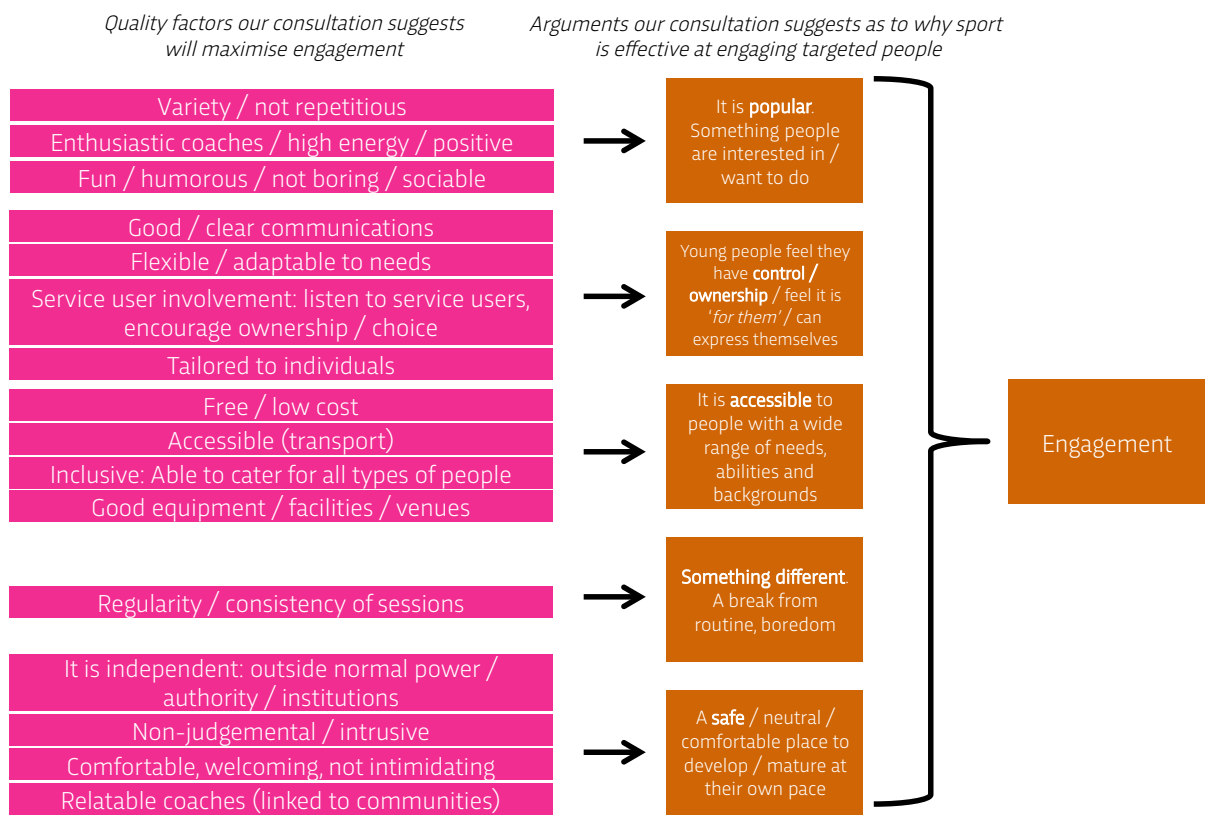


# ENGAGEMENT



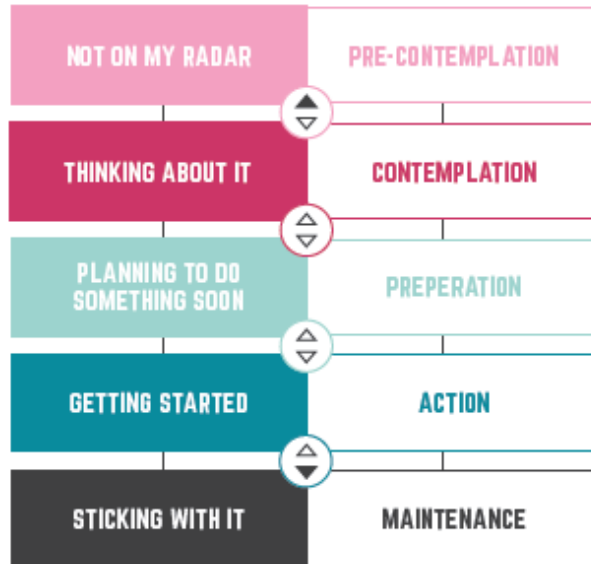
# ENGAGEMENT (DETAIL)

Looking across the consultation there appear to be five distinct arguments as to why sport seems particularly effective at engaging the target group, and a set of quality factors that enable this to happen.

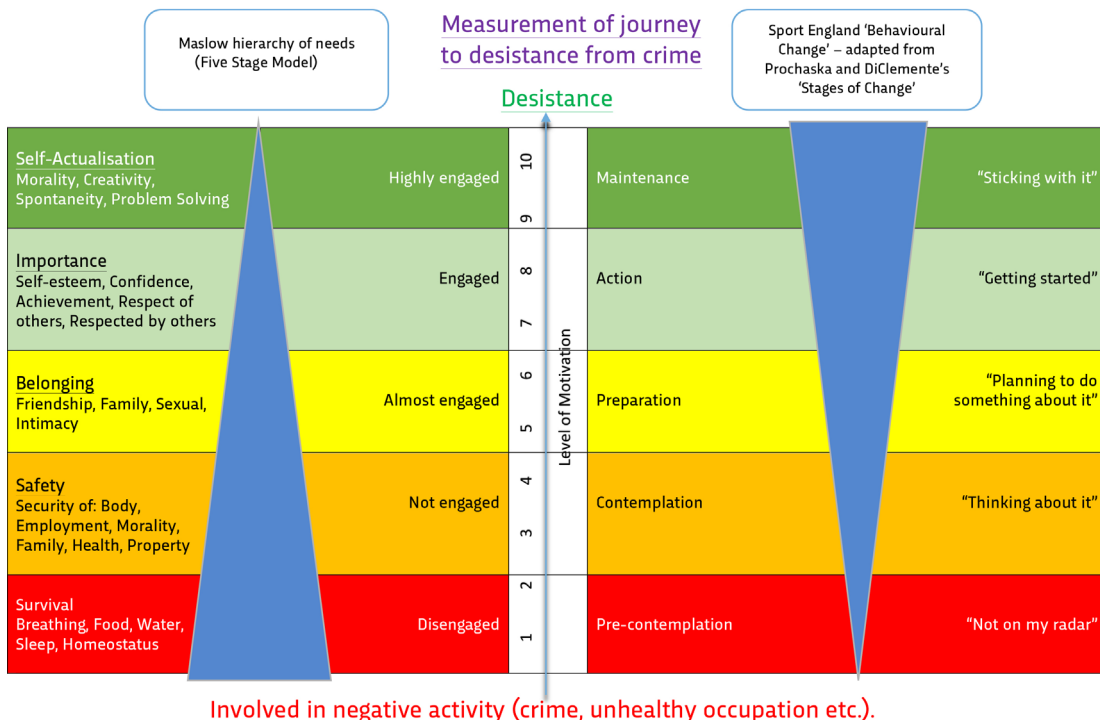


# MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

Because 'engagement' is such a critical part of the sport for desistance Theory of Change it is vital for sports projects to measure it. The Sport England behavioural change is ideal for this. We suggest that projects adopt this by maintaining a classification of their targeted service users according to the five headings below.

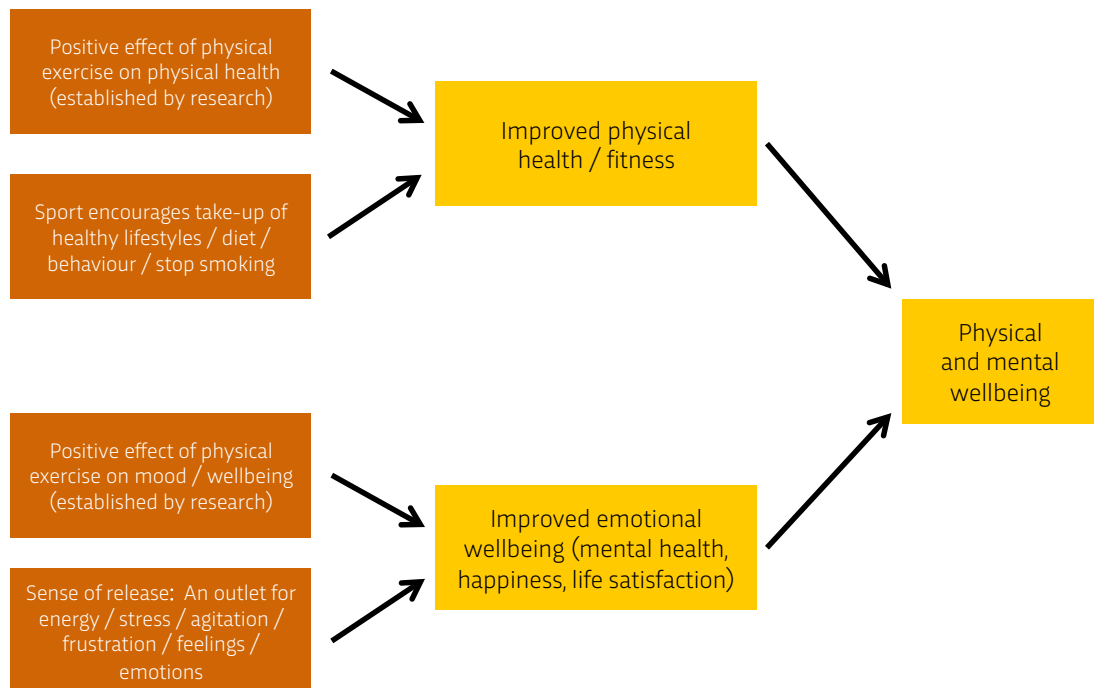


# STAGES OF CHANGE AND MASLOW MOTIVATION CHECK TOOL



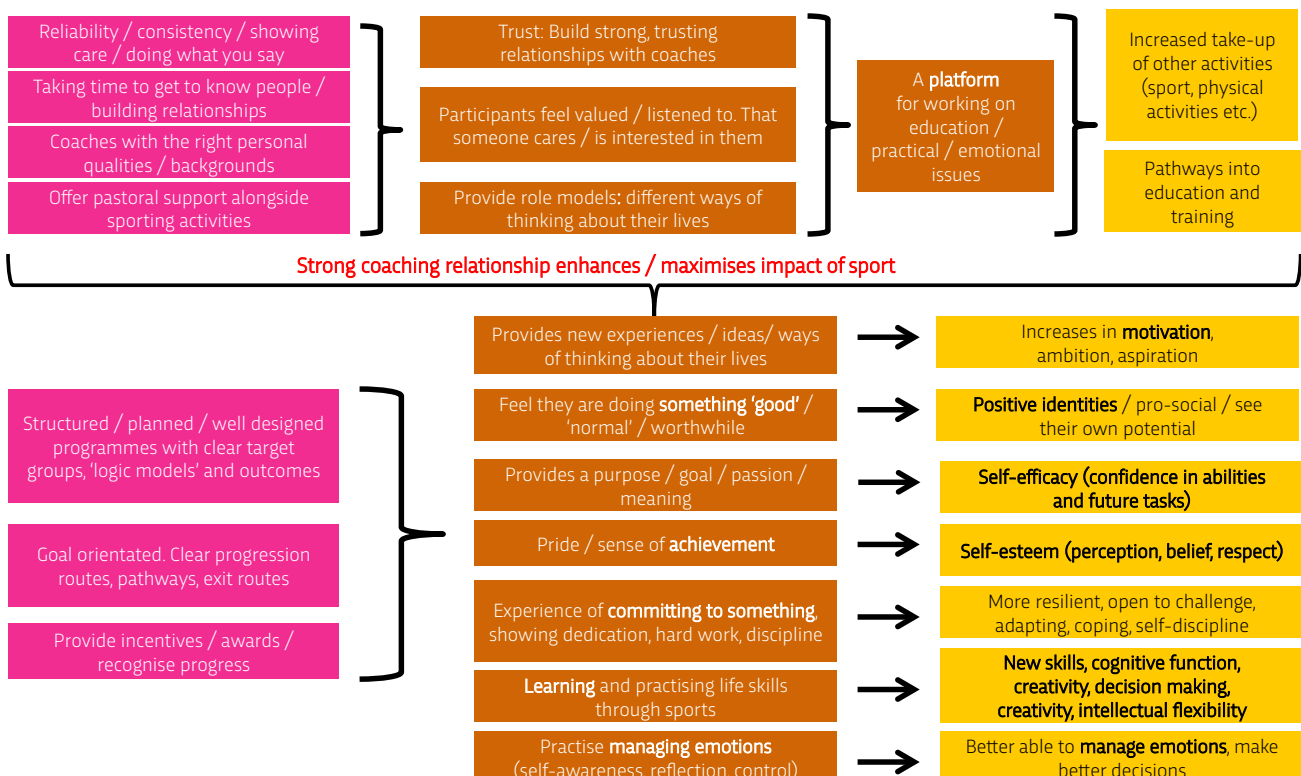
## OUTCOME GROUPING 2: PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

The argument around physical and mental wellbeing is relatively straightforward. It should be noted that the personal and social development outcomes also contribute to this outcome grouping.



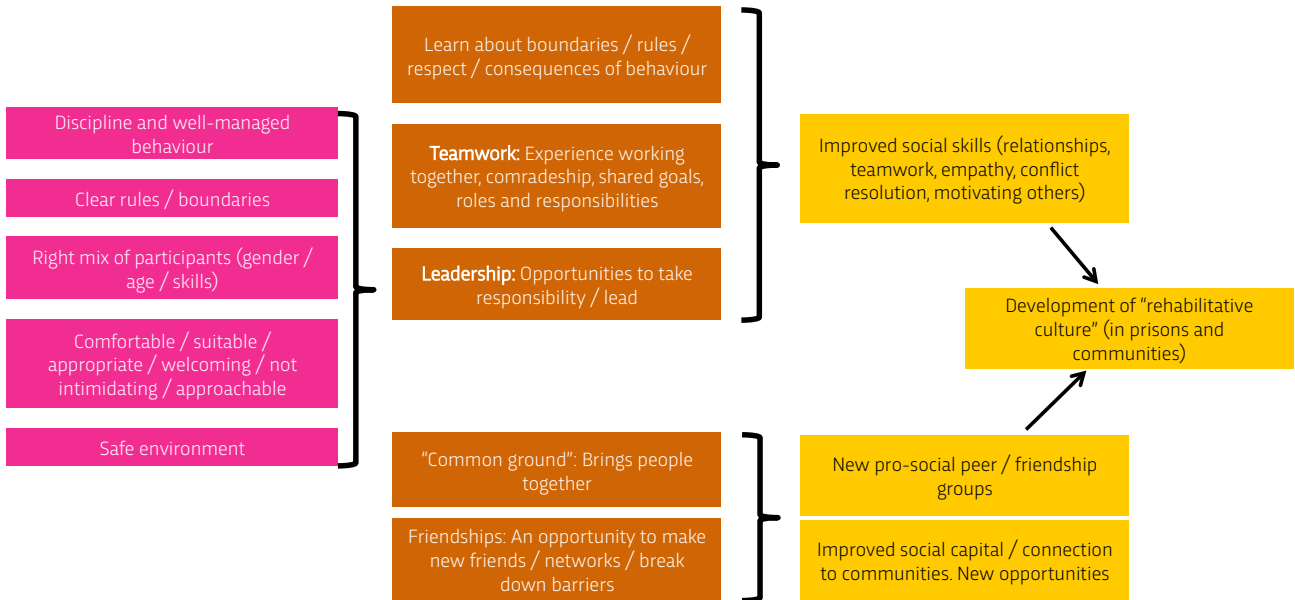
## OUTCOMES GROUPING 3: "INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT" AND OUTCOMES GROUPING 4: "PATHWAYS INTO EDUCATION AND TRAINING"

This part of the Theory of Change relates to how engagement in sport helps people to personally develop in ways that take them away from crime. It is arguably the most important part of the Theory of Change and also the hardest to articulate. From the consultation we have concluded that the **coaching relationship is key**, so we start with this: The contention is that while some benefits may occur naturally through sport a strong coaching relationship is critical to enhancing and maximising these effects. Another important point is that the outcomes shown in yellow support each other; individuals may grow along several fronts simultaneously.

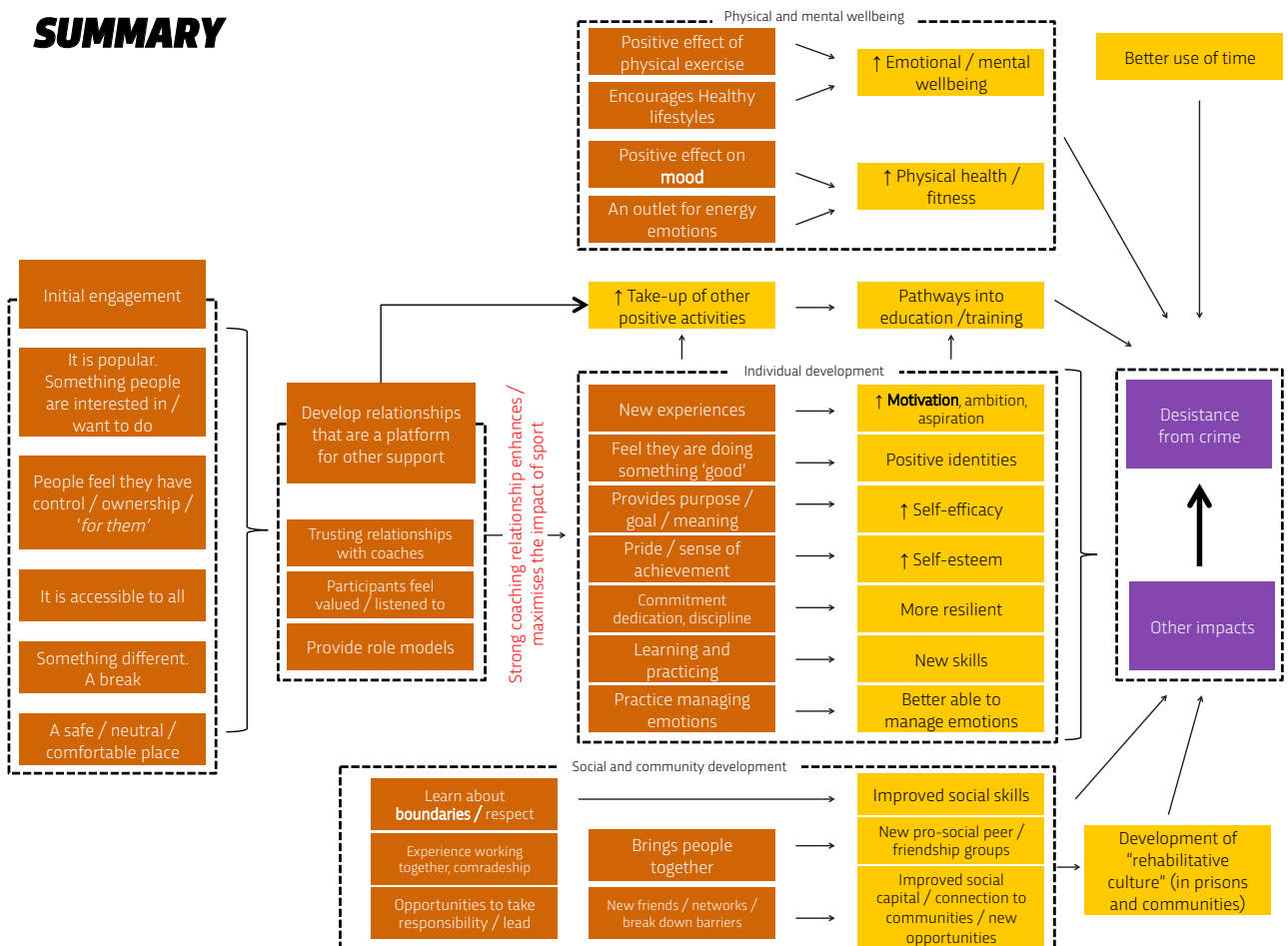


## OUTCOMES GROUPING 5: "SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT"

The fifth outcome grouping is similar to individual development but relates to the social aspects of sports participation. The quality factors, mechanisms and outcomes are suggested below.



## SUMMARY





## **SUMMARY OF THE THEORY OF CHANGE**

Based on what practitioners told us through the survey, the argument for sport's role in contributing to desistance from crime can be summarised as follows:

- Sport is **particularly effective at engaging people at risk of crime**. While some of this is down to the natural appeal of sport, we have also identified a range of quality factors and change processes that are likely to enhance this appeal; **making sure it is enjoyable, accessible, consistent and safe, and gives service users a sense of ownership or control over activities**.
- Ideally, coaches and sport mentors will build trust, make people feel valued and act as role models. Their aim is to build a platform to maximise the benefits of taking part in sport and community activity.
- Outcomes have been grouped into four areas:
  - **Distraction:** The simple argument that by taking part in sport, people at risk are not involved in anti social behaviour or substance misuse.
  - **Wellbeing:** The established physiological argument that physical activity improves health and mood.
  - **Individual development:** The wide range of personal attributes that can be developed through sport, and which are enhanced through the coaching relationship.
  - **Social and Community Development:** The social benefits of taking part in sports with others.

All of the above outcomes have known positive effects on desistance from crime and other outcomes (employment, health etc.) that are established pathways to desistance.

## **POTENTIAL USES OF THE THEORY OF CHANGE**

To recap, this document aims to distil and summarise the main arguments for sport and desistance from crime. We hope it will:

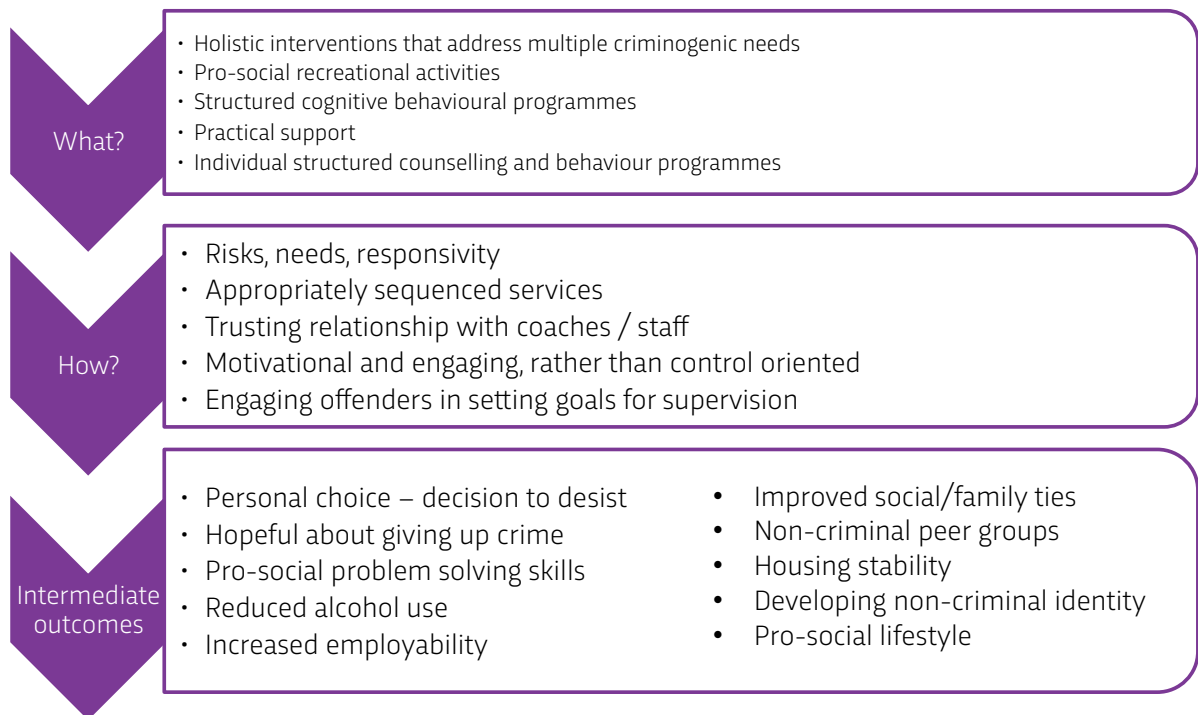
- **Make the overall argument for sport clearer and stronger.** The slides above might be used to persuade people of the value of sport.
- **Help us organise the existing empirical evidence about sport in prisons and communities:** ((i) young people on the margins of crime; (ii) young people engaged in the criminal justice system; (iii) young people in custody; (iv) young people in resettlement). We can start to bring together the existing evidence under the above headings. The following slide begins this process.
- **Identify those arguments where the evidence is not as strong and where further research is needed.** We expect there are gaps in the evidence base and a review of the evidence should help us to determine this.
- **Equip practitioners to develop theories of change for specific sports programmes - using the concepts outlined here.** Organisations wanting to develop their services and improve their evidence can draw on the concepts above, which should make the process simpler and help create more consistency across the sector.

## APPLYING THE EVIDENCE

Here are some of the responses from our user survey applied to the categories in the Theory of Change.

Better use of time	"If I am training, working hard and belonging to each session, I am not in trouble."
↑ Emotional / mental wellbeing	"It chills me out, makes me feel good and helps with stress."
↑ Physical health / fitness	"Keeping me fit and healthy. Keeping my mood up."
Pathways into education / training	"I have gained several qualifications that will allow me to move forward upon release."
↑ Motivation, ambition, aspiration	"It gives you satisfaction, a target to aim for and achieve."
Positive identities	"Sport can allow people to discover talents they didn't know they had or develop existing skills."
↑ Self-efficacy	"I have learnt to get fitter, which means I have learnt to 'own' my life."
↑ Self-esteem	"It has made me a more confident person as a whole."
More resilient	"For me in custody it is the biggest thing in my life."
New skills	"It gives you all types of skills which you might not realise: communication skills, team building, managing/coaching."
Better able to manage emotions	"During training I accidentally clashed heads with a team-mate. I would have previously lost my temper and become violent; we both would have. But we didn't. We admitted the pain and supported each other back to our feet."
Improved social skills	"Sport teaches me how to work with different people."
New pro-social peer / friendship groups	"Because it gives a sense of being welcomed and part of a team."
Improved social capital / connection to communities / new opportunities	"Learning and developing through sport has given me the experience and qualifications I need, opened my eyes and introduced me to a world that I could not see due to my previous stresses getting in the way. I now support young people through sport, I am a part of my community."

## SOME THEMES FROM THE EXISTING EVIDENCE BASE ON WHAT WORKS IN DESISTANCE PROGRAMMES



Drawn from: *What Works to Reduce Reoffending: A Summary of the Evidence* <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0038/00385880.pdf>

**Acknowledgements:**

We would like to thank the NASDC Steering Group, the NASDC membership and network, the 2nd Chance Group staff and tutors, Tanayah Sam Associates, and all of our services users and partners across criminal justice and health, academia and the public and private sectors for their help in developing this document.

[www.nasdc.org/membership/become-a-member](http://www.nasdc.org/membership/become-a-member)

We would especially like to thank James Noble at New Philanthropy Capital for his input in the development of the Theory of Change

Together, we support our members who are people and groups using the power of sport to inspire positive change and achievement with those who are considered to be the most disengaged, and who according to national statistics are most likely to commit crime.

Our members work across the following four key areas:

- ✦ **Prevention and early intervention**
- ✦ **Community sentences**
- ✦ **Custodial sentences**
- ✦ **Resettlement and services for people leaving prison**

Our members range from government departments in criminal justice and health, to academia and the Sport for Development, private and third sectors.

Join us, be heard and together let's promote the power of sport and transform the lives of people most in need of a second chance.

[www.nasdc.org/membership/become-a-member](http://www.nasdc.org/membership/become-a-member)

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*“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all kinds of discrimination.”*

**– Nelson Mandela, 25th May 2000**



This sector-wide Theory of Change enables organisations using sport to increase their quality and focus on preventing crime and increasing positive journeys away from crime. Training and support is available to members. Please contact NASDC to discuss the options for delivering the one-day training and support package.

**National Alliance of Sport for the Desistance of Crime (NASDC)**

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Website [www.nasdc.org](http://www.nasdc.org)

Twitter [@AllianceOfSport](https://twitter.com/AllianceOfSport)

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