DR JULIE CLARK

DR JULIE CLARK - GOWELL EAST RESEARCH PROGRAMME

SPORT FOR EVERYONE

GoWell East is a five year, multi-strand investigation, examining the impacts of the 2014 Commonwealth Games, and related regeneration interventions, on communities living next to some of the main Games venues in the inner East End of Glasgow. The study has been running since 2012, establishing baseline information before the Commonwealth Games, and is expected to conclude later in 2017. The project investigates how, and in what ways, regeneration activities and associated changes in the neighbourhood environment are connected with health and wellbeing. The study area contains the Emirates Arena and Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, as well as the new Athletes’ Village, which includes a mix of private and social rented housing. The new Glasgow National Hockey Centre and the refurbished Tollcross International Swimming Pool also border the study area. The research programme aims to investigate how change to the residential environment and amenities might affect the health and wellbeing of both new and existing local communities.

Steps Towards Active Legacy: Evidence so far

In 2016, GoWell East conducted what is planned to be the last of three community surveys in the study area, speaking with over 1,000 residents. The weighting and analysis of the final survey is currently underway and we expect the third of our Headline Indicators reports to be available by summer 2017.

Prior to this, in the second community survey, which was undertaken in the months following the Commonwealth Games, we interviewed over 400 residents who had also participated in the 2012 baseline survey, allowing us to investigate changes in behaviour and perception that might have occurred over that time period. The GoWell Wave Two Headline Indicators Report details findings. Notably, although we could not identify a trend towards greater levels of physical activity immediately after the Games, residents did report improved perceptions of the quality of local sports facilities. These perceptions were accompanied by higher levels of feeling safe when walking in the local area and improved perceptions of the quality of green spaces and of the neighbourhood environment, which may also encourage more walking in the area.

Further GoWell East research, conducted in local schools, and with community and policy stakeholders, highlights the significance of these preliminary findings. The team published a major report, focused on the Active Legacy theme, evaluating the pathways through which the host community in the East End of the city might gain physical activity benefits from the Games. Firstly, this report emphasises the key role that local schools can play in promoting levels of physical activity for children. In particular, there has been a trend towards an inclusive approach, which promotes physical
activity for all rather than only those more positively orientated towards sport. Pupils in nearby East End schools have benefitted from the physical proximity to new and enhanced sports amenities, including using them for sports days. There are indications that, immediately following the Games, there was greater interest in new sports, such as boxing and martial arts, which had featured in the event. Secondly, the report stresses the importance of the local environment as a means of supporting physical activity and a more active lifestyle. A safe and pleasant local environment is particularly important for informal exercise and active travel. The opening of the new Cuningar Loop forest park, along with reductions in vacant and derelict land should be beneficial over the medium term. This kind of day-to-day physical activity is especially useful for populations with a larger proportion of older people or those in poorer health. Further information can be found in The Glasgow 2014 Games: Regeneration for physical activity legacy.

Areas for Development

Our Equalities reporting shows that, although many people appreciate the calibre of local facilities, people with longstanding health issues or disabilities are less likely to be physically active than the remainder of residents. They are also less likely to use sports facilities. In relatively disadvantaged areas, this can be a sizeable percentage of the population, leaving considerable scope for outreach, to engage people with illness, disability or health concerns in physical activity. More information on this analysis can be found in the GoWell in the East End: Longstanding illness and disability report.

Issues of equity are also particularly relevant in considering school-age cohorts. The GoWell East Schools Survey project aims to analyse levels of youth physical activity in more and less affluent neighbourhoods, both in and beyond the east end. This research has exposed very high levels of physical inactivity because of time spent watching television, being online and playing computer games. It has also shown differences in the number of types of sport played by pupils at schools, with greater variety in more affluent schools. While the new and improved sports amenities in the study area are being access by local pupils, the Glasgow 2014 Games: Regeneration for physical activity legacy report also notes that school and parental resources remain a particular issue in supporting sport in more disadvantaged areas. Those schools placed to raise money to support physical activity, coaching specialists and extra-curricular activities beyond the school grounds may well likely to remain relatively advantaged in terms of sports provision without additional support being given to level the playing field in more disadvantaged areas.

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GoWell East reports can be found at:
http://www.gowellonline.com/goeast