

**Achieve More Scotland**  
**An impact evaluation of holiday and out-of-school activity**  
**September 2021**



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## About this report

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This report presents the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit's (SPIRU)<sup>1</sup> appraisal of the work of Achieve More Scotland<sup>2</sup>. SPIRU has no vested interest in the work of Achieve More Scotland; this is an independent appraisal. This report comprises a single page of headline findings, a three-page Executive Summary, and a full 31-page report including Annexes.

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## About SPIRU

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SPIRU is an interdisciplinary research group based at Glasgow Caledonian University, which often works in partnership with other stakeholders to investigate and develop effective responses to poverty and inequality in Scotland and beyond. SPIRU is committed to advancing GCU's mission to promote the Common Good and to align its research to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. SPIRU contributes to these ambitions through applied research, policy analysis and engaging with policy makers, campaign groups and community stakeholders.

SPIRU has a particular interest in food insecurity issues: it has written several reports on school food.<sup>3,4,5</sup> During 2020, it reviewed work in Scotland to tackle food insecurity during the coronavirus crisis, completing a nationwide review of local action,<sup>6</sup> and undertaking case study analyses of local partnerships,<sup>7</sup> and local organisations<sup>8</sup>.

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## Ten Takeaways

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- 1** Achieve More Scotland (AMS) gained charitable status in 2010, the year following a successful pilot in Glasgow.
- 2** AMS aims to promote, through sports and life coaching, the personal development, health & well-being, and employment prospects of disengaged and vulnerable young people. The initial impetus of AMS was to provide diversionary activities to dissuade young people from engaging in anti-social behaviour and crime.
- 3** AMS seeks to instil a positive mindset that normalises ambition and enable achievement through provision of opportunity.
- 4** There is a demand for the services that AMS provides. The scale of poverty and deprivation in Glasgow and surrounding areas implies that its work has the potential to be impactful.
- 5** No cost access is the hallmark of AMS' work. The removal of the barrier of cost facilitates participation that might otherwise be beyond the means of many families.
- 6** AMS has an extensive reach across the city of Glasgow, providing opportunities for boys and girls, particularly those in the early teen years. Increasingly, it is extending its provision to younger children in the city, and to those in neighbouring areas.
- 7** AMS presents as a service that works in conjunction with other community services. This is evident in school partnerships, where it is reported that young people are prospering in-school as a direct result of AMS engagement.
- 8** Many AMS staff have a local orientation and are often local residents. They are well connected, aware of opportunities and knowledgeable of diversity within their area. Many AMS staff have been former users of AMS' services.
- 9** Food is provided at each AMS activity. This is reported by families to reduce stress on household budgets.
- 10** AMS does not expressly aim to tackle poverty. However, it can be viewed as an anti-poverty initiative on account of the opportunities it provides (to staff and participants) which might otherwise have been inaccessible on grounds of cost.

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# Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

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## About this evaluation

This is an independent appraisal by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) of the work of Achieve More Scotland (AMS). SPIRU was invited by the Scottish Government in the Spring of 2020 to undertake this evaluation. Initial plans to complete the work over the Summer of 2020 were interrupted with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The evaluation draws on five sources: the wider academic/applied literature on out of school provision; documentary evidence provided by Achieve More Scotland; interviews with staff; interviews with service users; and responses of Paul Fletcher (Chief Operating Officer) to the research team's ad-hoc queries. The sources consulted are listed in the Annex and are referenced throughout the report. This report was drafted in November 2020, revised in the first few months of 2021, and published by SPIRU in September 2021. Professor McKendrick managed the evaluation, in conjunction with Jed Graham, a SPIRU researcher. The conclusions reached are independent.

## What we knew in advance

### *What are the key historical milestones of Achieve More Scotland?*

- **2009-10 - Inception and Formation.** AMS is successfully piloted in 2009, and attains charitable status the following year.
- **2014 – Football League.** AMS establishes a competitive 5-a-side league, in Petershill Leisure Centre.
- **2018 – Foreign Adventures.** The first partnership with a non-UK entity, Madrid Council, provides opportunities for young people to travel abroad.

### *What did we know about the work of Achieve More Scotland?*

- **Audience.** AMS's charitable efforts are targeted at young people and children.
- **Staffing.** AMS has 25 contracted staff, and has a Board of nine Trustees.
- **Size.** 172,800 attendances have been recorded at AMS sessions.
- **Provision.** 12,000 meals were provided through its 2019 Holiday Food Programme.

### *What community is served by Achieve More Scotland?*

- **Deprived Neighbourhoods in Glasgow and Lanarkshire.** AMS' work is targeted at the most disadvantaged parts of the city and surrounding areas.
- **Children youth and young adults.** AMS works with children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years old.

### ***What are the main goals of Achieve More Scotland?***

- **Core purpose.** The primary focus of AMS is to offer “programmes of diversionary activity” to children and young people.
- **Charitable Objectives.** AMS has four charitable objectives: (i) to promote, through sports and life coaching, the personal development, health & well-being and employment prospects of disengaged and vulnerable young people; (ii) to provide or assist in the provision of services to assist young people in their personal development, to develop their mental and practical skills so that they may increase their level of activity and, or become active members of their local community; (iii) to focus attention of the community at large on social issues with a view to creating a sense of individual and community responsibility and participation in the remedying of these problems; and (iv) to encourage the co-operation and partnership of voluntary groups, statutory authorities, private enterprise and individuals in the service to the community.<sup>9</sup>

## **What did we find?**

### ***What difference does Achieve More Scotland make?***

- **Providing alternatives to anti-social behaviour.** The initial impetus of AMS was to provide diversionary activities to dissuade young people from engaging in anti-social behaviour and crime.
- **Overcoming adverse circumstance.** Staff told us of individual cases of stark poverty, describing ways in which they intervened to try and lessen the impact of this poverty.
- **Facilitating socialisation.** AMS brings together children and young people from different parts of the city into a shared social space.
- **Offering opportunity for competition.** Children are challenged to improve their abilities through practice and competition.
- **Education.** Testimony from educational professionals and families indicates that AMS staff have helped to strengthen young people’s engagement in formal education.
- **Well-being.** Children’s confidence is reported to have grown and they are reported to be happier as a result of participation in AMS activity.
- **Supporting families.** Testimony from families reports that AMS food provision reduces financial stress, by providing food and activity at no additional cost to the family.
- **Opportunities for Employment.** Former users of AMS’ services have become key members of the organisation’s staff.

### ***What influences how Achieve More Scotland makes a difference?***

- **Context – poverty-induced demand.** There is a demand for the services that AMS provides. The wider context of deprivation in the city implies that its work has the potential to be impactful.
- **No cost access.** The removal of the barrier of cost facilitates participation that might otherwise be beyond the means of many families.
- **Staff qualities and quality of staff.** The way in which the service is provided is as important as what is provided. It is clear that staff understand the challenges faced by the young people (and families) that they serve.
- **Local connections and orientation.** Staff also have a local orientation and are often local residents. They are well connected, aware of opportunities, and knowledgeable of diversity within their area.

- **Funding.** As with all Third Sector organisations, what AMS is able to achieve is dependent on the funding available.
- **Embedded community connections.** AMS presents as a service that works in partnership. This is evident in school partnerships, where it is reported that young people are prospering in-school as a direct result of AMS engagement.
- **Raising ambition.** AMS instills a positive mindset that normalises ambition and enables achievement through provision of opportunity.
- **Impacting at scale.** AMS evidences that positive impact can be achieved at scale. The work of AMS is not limited to a single site, a single locality, or a single service. The model is adaptable and transferable.

## What needs to happen now?

### Positioning AMS to capitalise on holiday food provision investment.

- There is growing interest in extending entitlement of the equivalent of free school meals to eligible children and young people over holiday periods. If funding materialises from this interest, then it may present an opportunity for AMS to consolidate its work, as it has already demonstrated its capacity to deliver food alongside activity in holiday periods; however, it may also present a challenge to AMS if alternative suppliers are funded to deliver an equivalent service. It may be prudent for AMS to strengthen its evidence base to demonstrate its ability to meet the needs of children and young people in Glasgow over school holiday periods.

### Aligning work to wider strategic goals.

- AMS can demonstrate that it is fulfilling its charitable purpose and meeting the needs of many children and young people in Glasgow (and surrounding areas). However, it may also be helpful for AMS to acknowledge how its work already also contributes to wider local (City of Glasgow Council), national (Scottish Government) and global agendas (Sustainable Development Goals) to strengthen communities, tackle poverty, promote wellbeing and achieve sustainable development.

### The COVID-19 Recovery.

- The full effect of the economic and social crises engulfing Glasgow as a result of Covid-19 is not yet known. It is important to acknowledge the positive impact of organisations like AMS, when future funding decisions are taken.

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# 1. Introduction to this Impact Evaluation

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## Introduction

The aim of this report is to appraise the work of Achieve More Scotland. The starting point for our inquiry is an understanding that Achieve More Scotland (AMS) has successfully delivered holiday/after school provision in Glasgow. Our objective is to undertake a rapid appraisal to answer the following key questions:

- What is the nature of the service that the AMS provides?
- To what extent does provision meet local need?
- What is the impact – and claims to impact – of the AMS?
- What are the drivers of the AMS's success?
- What lessons can be learned from the work of the AMS that might help improve provision elsewhere?

## Achieve More Scotland and Glasgow

AMS provides opportunity for children and young people to engage in sporting activity in Glasgow. The range and scale of provision has expanded through time, and it now provides food alongside its activities.

The group is now expanding its reach beyond the city of Glasgow.

## Scottish Government Interests

The work of AMS is of interest to the Scottish Government, which has shown growing concern over food insecurity and in the nature of out of school provision/ childcare in recent years.

With regard to childcare/out of school provision:

- The 2017-18 Programme for Government committed to publish a framework for after-school and holiday childcare.<sup>10</sup>
  - In response to this commitment, the Scottish Government consulted the sector in 2019,<sup>11</sup> and published a summary of report on this consultation in November 2020.<sup>12</sup>
- The Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2018-2022 had a specific action on after-school childcare and holiday provision.<sup>13</sup>
  - In response to the commitment in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Scottish Government introduced a £3 million *Access to Childcare* fund in 2020 to support childcare provision and activities in local communities. Managed by Children in Scotland, fifteen organisations were funded in September 2020 (through to March 2022) for work that aims to explore how childcare can become more accessible and affordable to low-income families.<sup>14</sup>
- £20 million has been allocated to fund a range of activities for children, young people and families, in what is being described as a National Summer of Play in 2021.<sup>15</sup>
- In the 2021-22 Programme for Government,<sup>16</sup> the Scottish Government committed to:
  - build a new system of wraparound childcare for school aged children. It committed to a five-year delivery plan, with details to be published before the end of 2021.
  - Expand free early learning and childcare to 1- and 2-year-olds – starting in this parliamentary term for children from low-income households

With regards to tackling food insecurity:

- Three questions on food insecurity were introduced to the Scottish Health Survey in 2017,<sup>17</sup> which provide data for the new National Indicator on food insecurity that was introduced in 2018.<sup>18</sup>
- The Poverty and Inequality Commission has offered advice to the Scottish Government on tackling food insecurity during the school holidays.<sup>19</sup>
- The 2019-20 Programme for Government committed to increase investment from £0.5 to £2 million to accelerate action on food insecurity in the school holidays.<sup>20</sup>
- In May 2020, the Scottish Government published research mapping organisations responding to food insecurity in Scotland.<sup>21</sup>

The Scottish Government is interested in projects, such as AMS, where school holiday period provision comprises food and activity/childcare.

## ***Time to Prosper Impact Evaluation***

This evaluation is a key part of a broader project, funded by the Scottish Government, that aims to understand how different models of holiday/after school provision can generate positive outcomes for children and young people.<sup>22</sup>

AMS is of interest as it uses the medium of sporting activity to engage children and young people in a large city.

Complementary evaluations of organisations operating under different models are being undertaken as part of this wider project:

- A small food-based charity that operated in rural Scotland<sup>23</sup>
- A large food-based charity operating in deprived neighbourhoods across the whole of a Scottish city<sup>24</sup>
- An established youth project operating in a deprived neighbourhood in a Scottish city.<sup>25</sup>

## **Our Approach to Evaluation**

The approach adopted is that in the style of an appreciative inquiry, in which the objective is to explore ‘the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be’.<sup>26</sup> Adopting a ‘this works’ starting point, this appraisal focuses on identifying the drivers of success, in order that others might glean useful learning. Notwithstanding our starting position, we maintain a critical stance throughout.

This is a rapid evaluation, undertaken over a ten-week period in the latter half of 2020, a year in which the operations of AMS had to adapt to the conditions introduced to manage public health in response to Covid-19. Consequently, it was not possible to observe operations during a school holiday period, as was originally intended.

Our approach is described more fully in Annex 1.

## **Structure of this report**

This report begins by describing Achieve More Scotland and its work (Ch.02), before evidencing the need for its work in relation to tackling poverty and food insecurity, and providing support related to family employment (Ch. 03). The appraisal progresses through three sections:

- *Deliverables. Claims to Impact.* What does Achieve More Scotland provide? (Ch. 04)
- *What Makes the Difference?* A review that aims to understand the deliverables in context (Ch. 05)
- *Mission Match.* Mapping the work of Achieve More Scotland to the wider goals that work to serve the ‘common good’ in Glasgow and Scotland (Ch. 06).

We conclude by reflecting what has worked and what others might learn from this work (Ch. 07).

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## 2. The Work of Achieve More Scotland

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### Introduction

In this section of the report, we describe the activities, priorities, people, development and funding of Achieve More Scotland (AMS).

### Mission

The primary focus of AMS is to offer “programmes of diversionary activity”<sup>27</sup> that enhance young people’s lives (5 – 25 years old) in targeted areas of high poverty and material deprivation, according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Specifically, the charity aims:

- To promote, through sports and life coaching, the personal development, health and well-being, and employment prospects of disengaged and vulnerable young people;
- To provide or assist in the provision of services to assist young people in their personal development, to develop their mental and practical skills so that they may increase their level of activity and, or become active members of their local community;
- To focus attention of the community at large on social issues with a view to creating a sense of individual and community responsibility and participation in the remedying of these problems;
- To encourage the co-operation and partnership of voluntary groups, statutory authorities, private enterprise and individuals in the service to the community.<sup>28</sup>

In doing so, AMS asserts that this will be of benefit to “**young people’s physical and mental health and well-being, confidence and self-esteem, aspirations, personal responsibility, and life chances**”.<sup>29</sup>

AMS lists its own objectives as the following:<sup>30</sup>

- To develop our schools’ programme.
- To broaden our reach for our activities, including reciprocal international activity.
- To develop our Volunteer Development Programme.
- To continue to develop and deliver first class services.

### Origin

AMS originated in the North East and West of Glasgow.<sup>31</sup> Its offices are based in East Kilbride, although Glasgow is its operational base<sup>32</sup>. It is now expanding into neighbouring areas, such as North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire. The original remit was “**to reduce gang related violence, anti-social behaviour and crime amongst young people**”.<sup>33</sup>

### Development

Table 1 outlines the key milestones in the development of AMS.

**Table 1: Key milestones in the development of Achieve More Scotland**

2009, Oct	Launch of The North West Diversionary Programme. <sup>34</sup>
2010, May	Charity Registers with OSRC. <sup>35</sup>
2013, Dec	Registers as Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. <sup>36</sup>
2014, July,	Football 5’s League starts at Petershill Leisure Centre.
2018, Summer	Partnership with Madrid City Council. <sup>37</sup>
2019, Summer	Partnership with Jugensakademie in Northern Germany. <sup>38</sup>

## Finance

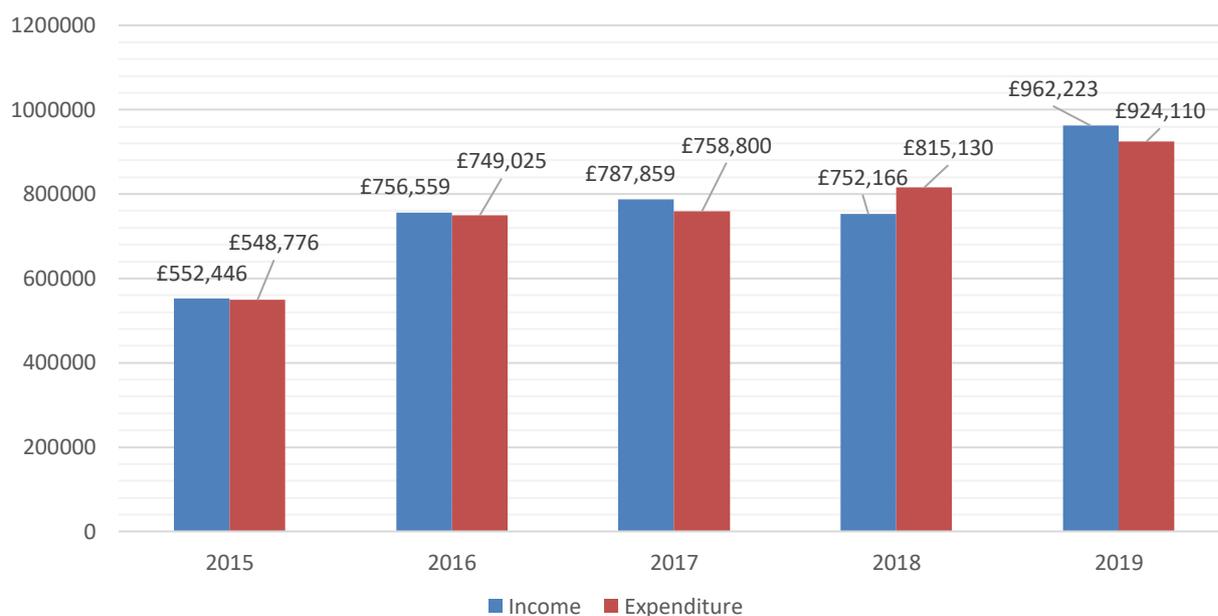
AMS is financed through fundraising, charitable activities (89.7% of income from 2019 accounts), and monies from partner donations.<sup>39</sup>

According to the 2019 Annual Report,<sup>40</sup> the largest portion of the charity's expenditure is staffing costs (£548,939), with the second highest being coach and driver hiring costs (£148,368).

Funding partners include:

- Glasgow Housing Association
- Glasgow Community Planning Partnership (North East & North West)
- Glasgow City Council – Children Holiday Food Programme & Glasgow Guarantee Programme
- Scottish Government Social Justice Division and People & Communities Fund
- Scottish Government Food Insecurity Team
- Pupil Equity Fund
- Foundation Scotland
- SCVO – CJS Programme
- Spirit of 2012
- NHS
- British Council (Erasmus+)
- YoMo
- The Kilt Walk
- Glasgow Life
- Cash 4 Kids
- YouthLink Scotland Cashback for Creativity
- Anonymous Donation
- Children's Aid Scotland

**Table 1:**  
**Income and Expenditure, 2015 to 2019**



Source: OSRC<sup>41</sup>

## People

AMS has a **Board of Trustees** which meets four times every year. This group currently comprises

- Michael Fletcher (Chairman)
- Kieran Gilmurray (Treasurer)
- John Kimmet
- Amy Dolan
- Linda Kozansoy
- James Winter
- Fiona Dyer
- Karen Glen
- Marie Leck

When recruiting a Trustee, AMS specify that ideal candidates should possess at least one of the following: 1) a legal background; 2) a financial/accounting background; 3) educational experience; 4) senior managerial or business experience; 5) experience of equal opportunities or disability needs; 6) an HR background; and, 7) at least one female Trustee and at least one male Trustee who have been programme participants.

AMS has a substantial staff complement. The current list of these **Officers of the Charity** is:

- Robert McHarg (CEO)
- Paul Fletcher (Deputy Chief Executive)
- Carla Fyfe (Head of Business Development)
- Kiera McGowan (Head of Dance & Activities)
- Scott McHarg (Football Development Co-ordinator)
- Sharon Cassidy (Administrator)
- Toni Crawford (Fundraising Officer)
- Luna Carmona Rebello (Marketing & PR Officer)
- Rodrick Watupa (Operations Assistant)
- Kriss Lisungi (Marketing Assistant)
- Ryan Thomson (Football Coach)
- David Sinclair (Youth Worker)
- Craig Connelly (Football Coach)
- Jen Jack (Dance Coach)
- Nikki Paton (Dance Coach)
- James McGuire (Volunteer Development Co-ordinator)
- James Young (Football Coach)

- Amy Daly (Empower Me Assistant)
- Les McGovern (Football Coach)
- Lee McLelland (Football Coach)
- Ben Daily (Football Coach)
- Humza Mudassir (Football Coach)
- Kevin Onanu (Football Coach)
- Craig Thomson (Marketing Assistant)
- Ahmed Mumin (Youth Development Officer)

Day-to-day running of the organisation is the responsibility of CEO Robert McHarg, who works as a liaison between the Trustees and the Officers of the Charity.<sup>42</sup> AMS is a Living Wage employer.<sup>43</sup>

## Provision

AMS concentrates on the delivery of community-based activities for young people aged 5 – 25. The charity claims to work with, on average, 3,000 young people each week, 48 weeks of the year<sup>44</sup>.

The activities that are offered include:

A **Dance Programme** involving more than 500 young people aged between 7 – 18. The activities were operating five evenings per week, throughout Glasgow. Teams from these programmes competed in a number of events across the UK.

A **Football Programme** takes place at sites in Penilee, Govanhill and Toryglen, with additional Friday evening leagues in Petershill Park, John Paul Academy, Springburn Park, Milton Community Campus, and Scotstoun Leisure Centre, between 18:45 and 22:00.<sup>45</sup>

**International Trips**, including one trip in 2018, **when** five young people spent one month in Madrid to deliver and lead on community dance and football activities.<sup>46</sup>

**#EmpowerMe** is a gender-focused initiative that brings girls and women to sessions that provide creative therapy, confidence building exercises, sexual health education, self-defence training, meditation, cookery projects, outdoor activities, jewellery making social enterprise, and personal finance.

**M | E | N Young Men's Mental Health Project**, aiming to provide mental health support and employability support to young men around the age of 16.

**The Employability Programme** operates with a separate project called 'Aim Hi'. This project develops hospitality skills with the purpose of training young people for local community sits, job centres, and local partners. As of 2018, 12 people have graduated from the scheme and 10 were subsequently employed in the industry. These activities are typically clustered together into geographical areas, for the supervision and division of tasks between staff.

**Operation Reclaim**: a youth programme operating in North Glasgow with the aim of diverting young people from alcohol/drug misuse and gang membership. This includes football coaching and dance schooling across Sighthill, Dennistoun, Carlton, Springburn, Cranhill, Barmulloch, Blackhill, and Royston.

**The North West Diversionary Programme**: Dance schooling and football coaching activities, with a similar objective as Operation Reclaim. This programme operates in the areas of Kingsway, Scotstoun, Temple, Blairdardie, Knightswood, Summerston, Drumchapel, Yoker, and Peterson Park.

**The North West Youth Programme**: Also utilizing sport and physical activity, with added youth work, in attempting to discourage involvement in undesirable social and lifestyle choices.

**The Volunteer Development Programme**: Revamped programme introduced in September 2018, with the view of retaining young participants within the charity. This aimed to improve skills, gain qualifications and experience, and provide wages to the participants.

**The Community Jobs Programme**: Internship programme, partnering with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), that employs young people with 'protected characteristics' at the charity. This aids in skill development, job experience, and income support.

## Conclusion

AMS continues to grow by offering similar programmes and activities to larger geographical areas (or clusters). In the 2018 Annual Report, the organisation planned to expand into North Lanarkshire; to deliver services and activities in Motherwell, Wishaw, Airdrie, Coatbridge, and Bellshill.<sup>47</sup>

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## 3. Does Glasgow Need an Achieve More Scotland? The Socio-economic Context of the City

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### Introduction

In this section of the report, we review the wider context within which AMS operates in order to ascertain whether there is a need for its service. We review the prevalence of poverty and food insecurity in Glasgow, and profile its working families.

### Glasgow

Glasgow is Scotland's most populous city, with a growing population of around 630,000 people, in a compact area that is the most densely populated among Scotland's local authorities.<sup>48</sup>

### Poverty in Glasgow

According to the latest Scottish Government reports (for pre-Covid-19), it is estimated that over one million people are living in poverty in Scotland at the current time, equivalent to 24% of children, 19% of working aged adults and 14% of pensioners.<sup>49</sup>

There is no direct equivalent of these national data that would allow poverty in Glasgow to be compared to the national average. On the other hand, recent improvements to the ways in which estimates of child poverty for local authorities are calculated, give greater confidence and improved understanding of its distribution across Scotland.<sup>50</sup>

End Child Poverty's estimate of child poverty for children aged under 16 suggests that child poverty in Glasgow is the highest in Scotland (32.2% for the city as a whole).<sup>51</sup> Our analysis of HMRC's 'Children in Low Income Families Measure'<sup>52</sup> suggest that more intense pockets of poverty can be found across the city, with

'local' poverty being a majority experience among children in some areas.<sup>53</sup>

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation provides a more broadly based summary of wellbeing, ranking small areas across Scotland in terms of levels of deprivation, and classifying them according to whether they are among Scotland's Most Deprived areas.<sup>54</sup> Once more, this provides evidence that Glasgow has a disproportionate share of Scotland's problems. Overall, approaching one-half of datazones in Glasgow are among Scotland's 20% Most Deprived areas (45.4%), with one part of Carntyne and Haghill ranked the second most deprived datazone in Scotland.<sup>55</sup>

### Food Security in Glasgow

In July 2018, food insecurity was added to the list of National Indicators that work toward achieving the eleven National Outcomes that are part of Scotland's National Performance Framework.<sup>56</sup> The Scottish Government is committed to measure whether Scotland is making progress in tackling food insecurity and – together other stakeholders – to take action to make this happen.<sup>57</sup>

Almost one in ten adults in Scotland (9%), report that, at some time over the last year (pre Covid period), they were worried about running out of food, because of a lack of money or other resources.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, it was self-reported that the same lack of money or resources, also led to 6% of adults eating less than they should, and 3% of adults running out of food. As for child poverty, there are no directly equivalent data for local areas.

One way in which we can approximate child food insecurity is to consider the number of pupils who are registered for free school meals. Although an imperfect indicator,<sup>59</sup> it might be reasoned that registration for free school meals beyond the years of universal entitlement (currently P1-P3 across Scotland, and P1-P4 in Glasgow) provides some indication of families need for support to feed school-aged children.

Again using pre-Covid data, to avoid any distortions, beyond the years of universal entitlement to free school food, one in five children in upper primary school (19.5% of P4-P7)<sup>60</sup> and one in seven secondary school pupils (15.6%) in Scotland are registered for free school meals.<sup>61</sup> In Glasgow, the respective proportions are 30% (for 2018)<sup>62</sup> for upper primary and 28.6% for secondary school. Although below the Scottish average, a substantial proportion of children in Edinburgh are registered for food support.

In 2018, more than four out of every five children beyond P3 were registered for a free school meal in Saracen Primary School, (81.4% of pupils), with the majority of children registered for free school meals in another eleven schools. In 2020, almost half of the children in Lochend Community High School were registered for free school meals (47.8%), with at least one third of all pupils registered in eleven other secondary schools.<sup>63</sup>

## Working Families in Glasgow

Two thirds of children living in poverty in Scotland are living in households with at least one adult in employment; the risk rate of this in-work poverty for families with children seems to have stabilised (68%), having risen markedly in the five years between 2009-12 and 2014-2017.

Just over 100,000 of Glasgow's citizens are aged under 16, with almost an additional 11,000 aged 16 or 17; approaching one in five of the city's residents are children (17.6%).<sup>64</sup> More than one third of Glasgow's 62,000 family households are headed by a single parent (34.5%).<sup>65</sup>

Local labour market indicators for Glasgow<sup>66</sup>, estimate that almost two thirds of working aged adults in Glasgow are in employment (65.2), the lowest in Scotland. This is despite the city having a jobs density of 1.03 (the number of jobs for each adult of working age). Glasgow residents typically earn £563 (median wage for full-time workers).

## Conclusion

With a sizeable child population, and many families at risk of poverty and food insecurity, it is clear that the service provided by AMS could make a positive contribution to children, family and community life across Glasgow.

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## 4. Deliverables: Claims to impact

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### Introduction

In this section we describe the claims to positive impact that were made by Achieve More Scotland, and on behalf of it.

### Earlier Impact Evaluations

Previous to this report, AMS has been the subject of two appraisals, both undertaken by Glasgow City Council in 2012. Each of these reports evaluated one of AMS' distinct programmes, one which was operated by AMS (Operation Reclaim),<sup>67</sup> and another operated by Glasgow City Council with AMS as one of the partners involved in provision (West/Central and West Youth Programme)<sup>68</sup>.

Thus, it is some time since the work of AMS was appraised. The scale of provision has dramatically increased since these evaluations. This indicates that this SPIRU impact evaluation is timely and will complement existing reviews.

### The Growth of Achieve More Scotland

As is evidenced by expenditure trends (Table 1, Chapter 2), AMS has grown over the last five years. One Executive noted: **"I think pretty much every year, just from looking at our accounts, we've grown as a charity [on] a linear scale ... We've brought in more staff, we develop more projects, we help more people which is the biggest thing for me"**.

This growth has facilitated an expansion in geographical reach and a widening in activity and provision. As the group extends work in North and South Lanarkshire, the number of classes and activity provisions have expanded.

### The Wider Impact of Achieve More Scotland

Although the formal goals of AMS are clearly stated, it was apparent in interviews that individuals emphasised different aspects of its work.

One respondent who had been with AMS from the beginning stated that **"when we started out, the role was very much about putting on activities, specifically for teenagers in the evening, to divert them away from crime and anti-social behaviour"**.

The importance of tackling crime and anti-social behaviour was shared by another colleague, who believed that **"the city is built on violence"**, referring to the gang culture of Glasgow and surrounding towns and villages. This interviewee believed **"A&M [Achieve More Scotland's former title] was the tool to reduce that crime, reduce violence, to make kids friendly"**. Another volunteer noted that the activities offered were a way of **"just to get young people off the street"**, in a manner not dissimilar to community centres and youth clubs.

However, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour is not the limit of AMS' endeavours. One interviewee said that **"I wouldn't say that it's just crime reduction..."** and that there are **"so many other strands that help the community, in every community that we're in"**. Another staff member added that they saw their work as **"making differences in kids' life, communities as well"**.

The focus on personal and community development underpins much of the activity that AMS provides. The employees perceive their work is a means to **"to engage people, to move them forward"**. There is a perception that citizens are being held back

by social conditions. A sense of facilitating freedom to achieve motivates many of the staff and volunteers, with one volunteer phrasing it as a chance that **“they will then make their own choices and move forward in life and develop”**.

A mother, whose child uses AMS’s after school services and also attends a school with AMS staff, said that **“my daughter’s confidence has grown so much”** since she started going to AMS’s youth groups and classes. **“She has come on leaps and bounds”**, she added.

Focusing on these wider social conditions, most interviewees noted AMS’s role as a means to either tackle poverty, or to mitigate its effects, as part of a wider community response. One interviewee commented that **“you really see poverty has such horrible impacts on the communities”**, with another member of AMS’s staff saying: **“Poverty is definitely the biggest thing that we see, that we comment on, from the perspective that poverty shapes all of our activities”**.

Most of AMS’s staff showed a desire not to restrict provision only to those in need. One respondent said that **“poverty is absolutely part of that [response], but that’s because it’s part of our area”**. Similarly, another interviewee noted that these deprived areas are only a geographical base, and that the activity is not exclusively targeted for poorer people: **“Not every single person who comes to us is like that. Some people just hear about it, like I did from friends”**.

It is clear that AMS operates in areas of high deprivation and poverty, and therefore their model and motives should not be separated from local anti-poverty agendas, no matter if also viewed as an anti-crime or a community development initiative. This constructs an understanding of AMS as a group that **“will shape and enhance what the area needs and it will depend on what supports are required”**.

## Activity Provision

One senior employee succinctly detailed that all of AMS’s activities focused on **“sport, physical activity, volunteering, skills enhancement, employability, and simply making new friends and having fun.”** In this section we shall look at the physical activity which is on offer to children and young people.

The provision of AMS dancing classes draws on the services of around 30 sessional staff, with one full time manager overseeing scheduling, timetabling, and technical programming of choreography and routines. In a typical area, dance classes are offered two to three times a week, depending on demand. These classes run after school for a three-hour period.

Teams from these dance classes compete in local and national competitions, which the staff feel is an incentive for high attendance – not merely dancing for the sake of it, but slowly progressing a talent. AMS dance coaches acknowledge that not every attendee is focused on dancing, and that some young people attend for the social connection. One coach said, **“we do teach dancing but ... because we aren't a dance school there is no pressure [to perform]”**.

The coaches stressed their availability to be something more to the students than instructors. The same coach continued to say that in certain times, the class **“don't dance one bit at all, because that's what they need in that moment in time”**. Rather, they would converse and talk about issues or problems they have. The discussions around talking, mentoring, and being there for children and young people resembled something between a school teacher, a close friend, and a youth worker.

The football classes are organised in the same fashion. **“Football is a universal language”** said one AMS’s coach – a former professional footballer. The visiting staff at AMS include a few ex-professionals, which legitimises the

AMS football as more than a 'kickabout' in the park. AMS offers other activities and sports that are overseen by former professionals, such as cricket, to appeal to wider group of children and young people.

## Food Provision

Food is provided alongside activity. Perhaps the biggest concentration of food and activity in a single space occurs at their Holiday Camps, in which a **"guaranteed hot meal"**<sup>69</sup> is provided by the charity. One Executive remarked on the growth of this programme: **"we had almost a thousand attendances and about three hundred, three hundred and fifty kids on average, each day"**.

An interesting feature of these holidays camps that is worth further exploration is the reported over-representation of Black Asian Minority Ethnic children. This was reported by AMS's staff, although no explanation for this was forthcoming.

Food provision is a key aspect of the Holiday camps. One staff member said that **"during the Summer, we see kids coming in and they've not had anything to eat from the night before, or even from breakfast the day before"**. The staff at AMS felt that their users were more vulnerable without the structure of a school day, heightening the importance of the guaranteed meal that was provided at the Holiday Club.

While AMS do not present themselves as a community foodbank, or as providing some form of emergency food provision, providing food to tackle everyday hunger is embedded in their service provision. **"It is fact here. We have hungry kids here"**, said one worker. One coach noted that at their classes, the children **"get decent food, they get fruit, they get water"** which was provided in conjunction with local suppliers.

The provision of food necessarily had to be extended over the course of the coronavirus crisis, and AMS's contribution to Glasgow's

emergency effort was acknowledged by some in the communities they work in. One senior executive noted that since the beginning of March 2020, as the UK headed into its first restrictions of movement and operations, **"we've handed out thousands and thousands and thousands of food parcels across the city"**; a significant departure from their normal provision in order to deal with the demand from their communities.

A user of AMS's services also noted how people in their area felt the food parcel delivery was a **"huge benefit"** for so many in the community. One interviewee discussed how **"They were amazing while the schools were off. There were food parcels going out to families that were targeted"** over the course of the UK's first national lockdown in Spring 2020.

The COVID-19 Pandemic perhaps was the biggest challenge for the organisation, but also, the greatest example of AMS's flexibility and strength of connections with local community hubs. AMS was able to adapt its service to attend to the most pressing needs.

## What if There was no AMS?

There was a hypothetical question posed in all the interviews: 'What if AMS could no longer deliver its provisions and activity?' Interestingly, the impact extended beyond the activity and food that was provided. **"I think the impact in the classrooms would be unmanageable"**, observed the head teacher of a local Primary School, when asked to consider this possibility, implying that AMS' work had wider impacts that benefited schools.

The UK is suffering from lower employment<sup>70</sup>, higher unemployment<sup>71</sup>, and higher underemployment<sup>72</sup> that is disproportionately affecting the lower paid<sup>73</sup>, the least educated<sup>74</sup>, the young<sup>75</sup>, ethnic minorities<sup>76</sup>, as well as sectoral differences like those in manufacturing and transportation<sup>77</sup>. This turbulence in the economy leaves Glasgow

especially vulnerable, as evidence suggests the city region is more susceptible and less resilient to economic shock<sup>78</sup>.

At the same time when there is a greater need for the services of AMS, it is significant that their ability to deliver these services is compromised by public health considerations.

## **Conclusion**

AMS has developed and diversified its services and provisions to attend to the emergent and evident needs of the communities in which they operate. AMS is now in a period of preparing to re-start the projects that have stalled as a result of the Pandemic. This will be of value to communities as it is a provider of activity and food, and social support in many communities.

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## 5. What Makes the Difference?

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### Introduction

In this section, we review the drivers that underpin the success of Achieve More Scotland.

### No cost access

AMS is operating as a “**community-based organisation**” that specifically caters for “**children and young people from the country’s most deprived communities**” according to one employee. Therefore, one feature of their provision which most volunteer and employed staff identified as crucial to achieving their charitable goals was the financial accessibility of their provision. All AMS activities and food provisions are universally free at the point of use.

An AMS Dance teacher said: “**So, I always like to ... make sure everybody ... knows it's free because dancing -... is a very expensive sport to ... take part in; especially in the areas where I come from and all my friends came from**”. The importance of overcoming financial barriers to participation was frequently noted by AMS and the parents who were interviewed; many also welcomed the free provision of food alongside AMS activity.

One staff member noted that “**everything that we do is free at the point of access, to ensure that no child or family is ever not allowed to participate through simply not having the economic means to do so**”. A user of AMS’s services validated this feeling by saying that “**see, because they’re providing it for free, its giving kids the opportunities that they wouldn’t normally have if it wasn’t for them [AMS]**”.

Participation is facilitated for children from families who are not living in poverty and

deprivation, but are from families that are ‘just about getting by’. It was noted that some clubs can disenfranchise families living on low incomes, but beyond poverty - who are not able to further budget additional sums to sustain sporting activity. In the case of one interviewee, their child attended AMS night classes four times a week; a frequency that could not be sustained if the services were not free at the point of access.

### More than no cost access

Although catering for children and young people from a wide range of circumstance, the extent of poverty and material deprivation in Scotland’s biggest city is well-documented. AMS staff recounted ‘on-the-ground’ experience and first-hand accounts on providing for children experiencing poverty. One coach recalled a striking example that he observed, “**There was three brothers that came... But only two of them ever came [at the one-time]. The reason was, they only had two pairs of football boots**”.

No-cost access may still be inaccessible if the wider conditions that shape participation are not considered. AMS’s answer to this specific problem was to sensitively provide a third pair of boots to the brothers; “**one of them got a prize**” said the coach. AMS operates against this backdrop of entrenched poverty in Glasgow<sup>79</sup>.

## Meeting the need to bolster wellbeing

More generally, AMS's work has broader impact on wellbeing. One employee noted, **"And for those young guys, who are really lost, they don't know what they are doing, they've not done well at school, they've no ambition to go to college, they've no ambition to go to university they don't know what they are going to do next"**. AMS aims to provide some focus and direction, supporting the work of others with responsibility for these young people.

The same is true of younger children. One mother, whose son had struggled to make friends since their arrival to Scotland, described how the services were **"making me happy because he is happy"**. She noted how the holiday camps were a service which helped their household deal with the Summer of 2020, and that her child had been able to finally make social connections with others in their local school and their wider local community.

Parents of children who go to AMS classes describe them as more **"outgoing"**, **"confident"**, and **"happy"** since their involvement.

## Instilling Ambition

AMS's work has an ethos of promoting personal freedom and choice. One senior executive observed that **"the biggest thing for us is to get children and young people as early as we possibly can to give them opportunities to develop and learn so that we can move them further ahead in relation to the more opportunities that they are exposed to, the likelier it is, we believe, they will then make their own choices and move forward in life and develop"**. This view of helping people to overcome the conditions that hold them back is the basis from which all the AMS provision stems.

This work extends beyond supporting individuals. **"Suddenly we're working together as a community"**, one interviewee said. They continued: **"There is that feeling of ambition you can do more and I think that a really big thing of what Achieve More Scotland do. They get to know the community and what can they do to enhance. They're not there to fix it all but what can we do to walk hand in hand with that community and if it's to help with poverty they'll do that, if it's about giving other opportunities, they'll do that"**.

This is a form of empowering both individuals and their communities, described as **"upskilling people within their own community and to take ownership of their own community"**.

**"We see a continuous cycle of young people, particularly young people, but [also] families who have been unemployed for so long; they've never had a job"**. One employee, who had come to AMS as a user of provision, said that, **"the best thing about working with Achieve More Scotland is just the opportunities that you get as a young person"**.

## Quality of staff and staff qualities

Working with children and young people requires a certain skillset, but as AMS grows, it also expands its partnerships with local schools and authorities. One interviewee commented that AMS **"pride ourselves in putting in great personalities into these schools and into the communities where kids connect with them"**.

AMS staff fulfil many roles; job titles, such as coaches and youth workers only describe part of what they offer. One schoolteacher elaborated, noting that AMS staff had an informal presence – not a presence necessarily of authority but of friendly liaison between authority and child. They noted that **"we've got youth workers high fiving - and at the minute the elbow thing"**. When

operating in schools, AMS staff are amenable to children, while supporting teachers and working with them to highlight and resolve disturbances over the course of the school day.

These connections with young people do not happen by chance; one of the most striking elements about AMS is its recruitment policy within the community it serves – often former users of their services. That’s **“the way Achieve More Scotland works”** said one employee; the staff **“were involved before they started working, so we were all taking part”**. One other respondent also detailed how their visiting of AMS dance classes at the age of 14 led to steadily rising through the ranks as an assistant coach on a sessional basis, to finally becoming a full-time head coach with managerial responsibilities.

## Local connections and understanding

In the interview with one local school’s Head Teacher, it was noted that she had taught the AMS worker who had returned to the school in the capacity as an AMS staff member. She viewed this positively, adding, **“I know her skills and I know where to go and get her”**. A sense of AMS staff having strong connections with their area, and with one another was evident throughout.

Area connections are served by the geographical hub model that AMS operates. One interviewee, who uses AMS’s services, described how the staff **“never walk past you in the street”**. This serves users too; one describing how the classes which AMS operated in their area were only **“a stone’s throw away”** from her home.

One AMS Coach noted the advantages of living in close proximity to where she worked in Possilpark: **“they all stay within about like a three-mile radius all the way round - not even that. They all stay like across the road and next door; if sometimes when they [parents] pick them up, they’ll pick like five**

**or six kids up and just drop them all off. So, they definitely feel it is kind of like a family thing”**. Furthermore, the interviewee in this case was also a PE teacher at a local school, furthering the familiarity and connection between families, children, and the AMS staff, as some of the children and parents know her from her ‘day job’.

AMS is committed to delivering in a way that meets the diverse needs of the community in North East Glasgow. One employee of the organisation noted that **“We are now engaging with children and young people from sixty, seventy, eighty different countries, most weeks”**. Racial, national, and ethnic diversity, as well as some language barriers, have been known to exclude certain communities from participation.

AMS engage or employ individuals whose first language is not English, and include those whose country of origin includes the DR Congo, Somalia, Eritrea, Poland, Palestine, Iran, and Iraq. One such employee told me that their former status as a refugee in Glasgow enables them to better understand and support young people from similar backgrounds.

## Embedded Community Connections

AMS has operated as an independent provider in the community, but increasingly seeks to work alongside other providers. One such example is their work in primary schools. One Head Teacher noted that **“we were having major issues with regard to behaviour”**, before the introduction of AMS staff. **“We were managing it and we were firefighting, but we weren’t effective, and it wasn’t a good atmosphere”**. This atmosphere was boiling over at times, and becoming disruptive for students and teachers.

AMS’s activity in schools is centred around break and lunch times, where they present a less formal presence compared to the

teaching staff. The teaching staff remain separate from the AMS group, but as our interviewee commented, **“as far as I’m concerned Achieve More Scotland are part of our core staff now”**. While the AMS offer in school revolves around sport and physical activity, their approach is closer to community worker and youth worker, rather than sports coach.

**“Generally, the rule within a school is the things that happen within a school we deal with in a school, and things that happen outside of school we don’t deal with because that’s for other agencies or the parents or possibly the police if required”**; however, the Head Teacher continued: **“But suddenly we had that link with outside after three o’clock because we had little stories coming back and forward and that really supported that feeling of a kind of united front within our community and suddenly it became a community support rather than a school support”**. AMS in partnership with the school provided a bridge of community support that broke down a culture of **“them and us”** between the school on one hand, and young people and their families on the other.

The value of this bridging community support is furthered by the action seen on individual prospects, furthered by training and employment opportunities. **“We see a continuous cycle of young people, particularly young people, but families who have been unemployed for so long; they’ve never had a job”**. One employee, who had come to AMS as a user of provision, said that **“the best thing about working with Achieve More Scotland is just the opportunities that you get as a young person”**.

## Funding

One theme in the interviews with volunteers and staff was the continual pressure faced with sourcing funding to support the group’s activities. **“Well, obviously, money...”** laughed one full-time worker; when asked the question the most difficult part of their role, and what would make their employment easier and better. The interviewee continued: **“like obviously if we had more money, then we would be able to do more things”**.

All AMS staff and volunteers expressed anxieties or determinations about organisational funding – some even more than once over the discussion. One AMS staff member described their work with AMS as fulfilling as **“there is no barriers, there is no limit...”** but continued to add, however, that, **“it really depends on the money, if we get the money to expand, we would literally go everywhere”**.

Most of the replies on the subject of finance were light-hearted. However, concerns were raised at the amount of administration that was required to support funding applications.

## Conclusion: “They always have time for people”

The quality of the AMS staff is its greatest strength - the young people can see themselves in the staff who support them. However, the way in which AMS operates and is organised helps to ensure that this staff potential is fully realised.

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## 6. Mission Match

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### Introduction

In this section we explain how the work of AMS contributes to wider agendas at local, national and global levels of analysis.

### Tackling Child Poverty and Food Insecurity in Scotland

The *Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017* committed Scotland to eradicate child poverty by 2030<sup>80</sup> with the *Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022*<sup>81</sup> outlining the initial means through which this is to be achieved. Within this Plan is a 'driver diagram' which described three realms of anti-poverty actions. The work of AMS can be described in terms of each realm:

- *Increase income from employment.* It might be hypothesised that children's participation in AMS enables their parents to participate (or participate more fully) in the labour market, thereby increasing their income from employment.
- *Reduce cost of living.* It might be hypothesised that AMS provides accessible and affordable (i.e. no-cost) activity that either removes or reduces expenditure for families (who might otherwise be spending on children's leisure).
- *Income from social security or benefits in kind.* The provision of food as part of the AMS is a benefit in kind that removes a direct cost from household budgets.

More generally, food provision is an action to tackle food insecurity, which as noted earlier, is one of the National Goals that Scotland is committed to monitor and take action to address, as part of the National Performance Framework.

As was noted in the Introduction (section 1), through its *2021-22 Programme for Government*,<sup>82</sup> the Scottish Government has committed to strengthen the role of childcare in tackling child poverty in the years ahead.

The strongest impact of AMS on tackling child poverty may be less direct, i.e. by engaging children and young people, providing focus, interest and direction that encourages personal development, and provides an alternative to pathways that lead to less positive destinations.

Others might simply assert the value of what AMS provides is that it enhances the quality of life as lived, in the here and now.

Therefore, the work of AMS could be considered to have a longer-term impact on tackling child poverty, or value for softening the impact of child poverty, at the current time. However, these observations are not inconsistent with the recognition that the work of AMS delivers what is required in the national action plan to tackle child poverty and national aspirations to promote food security at the current time.

### Glasgow's Local Child Poverty Action Plan/Report

At the time of writing, local authorities and their local NHS Board are preparing their third Local Child Poverty Action Report to report on progress in tackling child poverty locally in 2021 and to outline the specific actions to be taken in the year ahead.

In the first report,<sup>83</sup> there is acknowledgement of the investment in the Holiday Food programme, which funds holiday activity programmes to offer healthy meals and snacks (which is presented as an example in the 'cost of living' driver).

Similarly, there is reference to the funding of organisations that provide similar services to AMS, e.g. free swimming (Glasgow Life), street play (PEEK). The work of AMS is consistent with what Glasgow is seeking to achieve through its reducing the cost-of-living work.

In the second LCPAR, holiday provision is headlined in the Chief Executive's Statement of Commitment (making reference to the Children's Holiday Food Programme, the actions of which were detailed in full in the main body of the report.<sup>84</sup> It is reported that £2 million was invested for the third years in succession to fund the Children's Holiday Food programme that provides a hot meal and snack to Glasgow's nursery, primary and secondary pupils during school holiday periods.

## Scotland's National Performance Framework

Each Scottish Government (and the Scottish Executive before that) has outlined its vision for Scotland. A National Performance Framework<sup>85</sup> was introduced in 2007 and re-launched in 2018. It defines the national purpose in terms of five goals, underpinned by three values. Providing focus to the framework are 11 National Outcomes and 81 National Indicators (a revision of the 16 Outcomes and 63 Indicators that provided focus from 2007-2018).

The work of AMS is closely aligned to two of these National Outcomes:

- are healthy and active
- tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

Furthermore, it might be argued that the way in which AMS operates also contributes to several others:

- grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential
- live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

- have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone

Conceived thus, the work of AMS can be understood as contributing to a range of Outcomes that are valued in Scotland in that they work toward the shared vision of what Scotland could be.

At a more focused level, the work of AMS might also be hypothesised to make a more direct positive contribution on improving 'performance' for a number of the National Indicators:

- Child wellbeing and happiness<sup>86</sup>
- Children and positive relationships<sup>87</sup>
- Child material deprivation<sup>88</sup>
- Confidence in children and young people<sup>89</sup>
- Resilience of children and young people<sup>90</sup>
- Engagement in extra-curricular activities<sup>91</sup>
- Economic participation<sup>92</sup>
- Relative poverty after housing costs<sup>93</sup>
- Cost of living<sup>94</sup>
- Food insecurity<sup>95</sup>

Clearly, the work of AMS would be of an insufficient scale to shift overall national performance. However, these are conceived as 'indicators', and there is merit in explaining how the work of the AMS contributes to these wider national agendas.

## The Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, all member states of the United Nations adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, at the heart of which are 17 Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>96</sup> which are a call to action in all countries. It could be argued that these are more pertinent in nations such as Scotland, in comparison to the Millennium Development Goals, which they replaced. Scotland is fully committed to working toward achieving these goals.<sup>97</sup>

The 17 Global Goals, are monitored through a framework of 231 unique global indicators (some of which are shared across Goals). As for the National Performance Framework in Scotland, there is merit in positioning the work of AMS against the SDGs to clarify how its work contributes to this wider global agenda: The SDGs that are pertinent are as follows:

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

## **Conclusion**

The work of AMS contributes in many ways to a range of wider agendas at the local, national and global scales.

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## 7. Conclusions

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### Introduction

In this section, we reach conclusions on each of the five research questions.

### What is the nature of the service that the AMS provides?

The core offer of AMS is regular sporting activity (during and outside term time) for children and young people across Glasgow and parts of Lanarkshire. Supplementary activity is offered to smaller numbers of users.

### To what extent does provision meet local need?

As with much of urban Scotland, and in each of its largest cities, many families are struggling to 'get by' and many are living in poverty. There is a demand in Glasgow for services that offer opportunities for young people to pursue sporting interests – without incurring cost.

### What is the impact – and claims to impact – of AMS?

AMS has delivered many opportunities for young people to participate in sport, with positive impacts reported on personal development, confidence, socialisation and opportunities to engage in competition.

### What are the drivers of the AMS's success?

Demand for the service provided implies that it has the potential to be impactful. However, demand does not pre-determine success. The success of PYCP reflects the specific actions and approaches of those involved (personal skills and sensitivity to circumstance) and community orientation (community spirit and community connections).

The fusing of provision across formal educational settings and holiday out of school settings is emerging as a particular strength of the AMS model.

### Conclusion: What lessons can be learned from the work of the AMS that might help improve provision elsewhere?

AMS uses the medium of sport to facilitate personal development and community interaction. There are many other examples of sport being used to these ends across Scotland. The success of the AMS model derives from the way in which staff are able to engage young people. It also demonstrates that these successes can be achieved at scale.

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# Annex 1: Our Approach to Evaluation

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## Introduction

In this section, we describe and appraise the approach taken in this impact evaluation.

## Why AMS?

As noted in the introduction, this evaluation is a key part of a broader project, funded by the Scottish Government, that aimed to understand how different models of holiday/after school provision generated positive outcomes for children and young people.

The Scottish Government suggested that AMS was included as one of the case studies, as it was an using the medium of sport (with supplementary food provision) to engage young people across Glasgow.

## Focus

As noted in the introduction, our objective was to undertake a rapid appraisal to answer the following key questions:

- What is the nature of the service that the AMS provides?
- To what extent does provision meet local need?
- What is the impact – and claims to impact – of AMS?
- What are the drivers of the AMS's success?
- What lessons can be learned from the work of the AMS that might help improve provision elsewhere?

## Appreciative Inquiry

As noted in the introduction, we have adopted an approach that in the style of an appreciative inquiry, in which the objective is to explore 'the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be'.<sup>98</sup> We do not claim to have undertaken work that adheres to all aspects of Appreciate Inquiry; rather, we assert that the broad objectives of such work framed our approach. Adopting a 'this works' starting point, the appraisal focused on identifying the drivers of success, in order that others might glean useful learning. Notwithstanding our starting position, we maintain a critical stance throughout.

## Activities

As noted in the introduction, our approach comprised four elements.

- A review of earlier appraisals
- An analysis of documentary evidence from AMS
- Interviews with six stakeholders, at different levels in the organisation
- Interviews with two families.

Each is discussed in more detail in this Annex.

## Timeframe

Prior to the start of the fieldwork, John McKendrick met several times with the Scottish Government to agree project objectives, and contacted AMS, who agreed to facilitate the evaluation.

The fieldwork started in 2020 on September 29<sup>th</sup> and concluded on December 7<sup>th</sup>, covering a ten-week period. During this period, Scotland tightened restrictions on mobility and interaction, in order to protect public health from Covid-19.

## People

The research was completed by Jed Graham, under the guidance of John McKendrick.

Jed Graham was employed 0.5 FTE for this ten-week period, although he was also responsible for undertaking a mapping of local provision of holiday activity/food provision in a case study beyond Glasgow during this period. In effect, Jed committed 12.5 days to this impact evaluation.

John McKendrick managed and designed the overall project. John also reviewed all interview transcripts and supported Jed, who is lead author of this report.

Although jointly responsible for this report, John and Jed worked as part of a broader research team of five, which met weekly from September 29<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss common interests and emerging issues across the four impact evaluations that comprised the broader project.

## Research Ethics

The Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University approved the fieldwork. At each stage of the research design and administration, steps were taken to ensure that the research adhered to recommended practice for document analysis and key informant interviews. Specific steps included:

- Providing interviewees with information about the purpose of the research and the research requirements, to ensure that participation was based on informed consent.
- Only collecting personal details (names and contact details) for the purpose of arranging for the receipt of a voucher (for a store of their own choosing), as a token of appreciation for their participation.
- Asking for permission to record interviews and explaining the reasons for recording
- Storing research data securely, e.g., password-protecting transcripts.

- Removing personal details (names and contact details) from data files and storing in line with General Data Protection Requirements.
- Ensuring that no service users are identified by name in the published report arising from the research.
- Offering interviewees the opportunity to receive copies of the final report.

## Working with AMS to Facilitate the Research

Jed had an introductory telephone meeting with AMS's Deputy CEO, Paul Fletcher, on Wednesday 21<sup>th</sup> October 2020. AMS was keen to support the evaluation, acknowledging that this would be a valuable exercise for AMS in addition to meeting the needs of the *Time to Prosper* project. A workplan was devised and approved on this call.

Regular communication was maintained throughout. AMS assisted with interview recruitment (staff and parents), and AMS documentation. AMS provided a preliminary list of prospective interview participants on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> of October. Jed then assumed responsibility for contacting the individuals and agreeing arrangements for interview.

## Activity I: Appraising Previous Evaluations of AMS

Glasgow City Council had written some reports on the work of AMS, which provided useful historical overview. However, these reports offered little that was of value to understanding current operations.

The reports concerning Operation Reclaim<sup>99</sup> and West/Central and West Youth Programme<sup>100</sup> are in the main body of the report.

## Activity 2: Evidencing Outputs and Outcomes from AMS's Documentation

Recent annual reports were helpful to understand the work of AMS: we reviewed, the 2018 Annual Report<sup>101</sup>, and the 2019 Annual Report<sup>102</sup>. Additionally, we sourced the annual reports to OSCR, the charity regulator,<sup>103</sup> and we reviewed the content on AMS's own website.<sup>104</sup> This informed our understanding of the organisation, their operation, their objectives, and their growth, prior to any discussion with AMS staff or executives.

## Activity 3: Learning from Staff

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with six project staff:

- The Deputy CEO, who oversees daily operations.
- Head of Dancing Operations.
- Football Coach.
- Dancing Instructor.
- School Volunteer.
- Cricket Coach.

The interviews covered the following themes:

- Description of the work of AMS
- Description of their work with AMS
- Best things about their work with AMS
- Most challenging aspect of their work with AMS
- Who is reached and not reached?
- Who benefits most?
- What would make AMS work better
- Advice to others who might adopt the AMS way of working
- If AMS did not exist, what would be the impact

The interviews lasted between 23 minutes and 70 minutes and were undertaken in video call format.

Staff readily accommodated the research and were engaging in the interviews. The information provided was valuable in enabling

us to better understand the work of the AMS and the different staff contributions. Staff were also open about the challenges of working with the AMS.

## Activity 4: Learning from Users

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with two families and one local head school teacher that has had contact with AMS.

- User who had been visiting AMS for the last 18 months. Current age of child is 7 years old.
- User who had been visiting since last year, who has a child in a school with AMS volunteers. Child is in Primary 2.
- Head teacher who had come into the role 2 years ago. Previously the school's deputy head teacher, when AMS services became operational in the school.

The interviews covered the following themes:

- Introduction to self
- Management of out of school care
- Experience of financial stress
- Participation in other activities
- Initial awareness of work of AMS
- Benefits of engaging with AMS
- Costs involved in AMS
- Time use when children are at AMS
- If AMS did not exist, what would be the impact

These two interviews lasted 17 minutes and 39 minutes and were undertaken in video call format.

## Reflections

It would have been instructive to engage more of the young people and families who made use of AMS' services. As Brent (2009) has argued, describing deprived neighbourhoods in a way that solely relies on secondary evidence from official documents, maps, bar charts and statistics fails to adequately tell the stories of people's lives and experiences and instead reduces them to diagrams and infographics.<sup>105</sup> We attempted to avoid this problem by engaging with staff. However, our analysis would have been enriched if we had engaged more users of AMS, in particular to the children and young adults.

Due to the coronavirus crisis, fieldwork was not possible over the duration of this study. It would have provided an opportunity to observe AMS in action, and strengthen relationships with the interviewees.

## Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations of a rapid impact assessment, the research delivered to brief, enabling us to address each of the research objectives.

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## Endnotes

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