



English summary  
of Fafo-rapport 2021:11

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## Analysis of Leisure activities in Gamle Oslo District

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## Our assignment

Gamle Oslo District sought more insight into how the district's organised leisure activities are adapted to the needs of the children and young people who live there. The district wanted to know how the many different leisure activities in the district are used, by whom and why, and whether the children and young people in the district know about the organised leisure activities that already exist. The purpose of our assignment was to examine the need to implement any improvement measures, such as changes in the district's own organised leisure activities and allocations, recommendations or grants to NGOs, voluntary organization or associations. The following components were to be covered in the assignment:

- Investigation/data collection related to the district's leisure activities for children and young people, both those run by the district itself and those provided by professional NGOs, local voluntary organization or associations.
- An analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected that assesses what constitutes a satisfactory programme for children and young people in the district and whether the needs of those most at-risk are being met.
- An evidence base with recommendations for improvements to the existing leisure activities and/or for new models of collaboration and co-creation.

In our assessment of the current organised leisure activities for children and young people, our remit included obtaining insights from the following groups:

- Children and young people (both users and non-users of the leisure activities)
- Parents/guardians
- Schools in the district
- NGOs, voluntary organization or associations that provide organised leisure activities for the children and young people (the district's own organised leisure activities and professional NGOs, local voluntary organization or associations)
- Any other services that have contact with children and young people (child welfare service, school health service, police)

## **The child and youth population in Gamle Oslo District**

The party commissioning the report compiled general statistics on the district's child and youth population and their families, and sent these to us in the form of notes in September 2020. The statistics are summarised as follows:

Of all the pupils in the district, more than three in five are primary schoolchildren (3365), most of whom live in the sub-districts of Ensjø and Kværnerdalen. One-fifth attend lower secondary school (1056), with the highest number living in Vålerenga sub-district, and one-fifth are upper secondary school pupils (1011). In total, most of the children and young people live in the sub-districts of Ensjø and Grønland. The number of children and young people is decreasing as the age of the child and youth population increases, but the proportion of immigrants is increasing because more Norwegian families than immigrant families are moving out of the district. The proportion of at-risk children and young people is generally higher than in the city as a whole, especially among children and young people born in Norway to immigrant parents. The proportion of low-income families (25%) is almost double that of the city average, with the highest proportion in the sub-districts of Nedre Tøyen, Enerhaugen and Grønland. The proportion of young people in the district that had not completed upper secondary school within five years in 2018 was higher for boys (40%) than for girls (29%). In statistics from all districts, Gamle Oslo District had the highest rate of youth crime in the age group 10–17 years, with a higher prevalence in the district's residential areas compared to other Oslo districts. Almost half of the crimes were committed by young people who were 'repeat offenders', with four or five registered incidents. More than one in ten registered repeat offenders in Oslo in the period 2017–2019 lived in Gamle Oslo District even though this district has the lowest proportion of inhabitants in the age group 10–17 years. In addition, the child welfare service received a higher proportion of notices of concern (7%) from within the district than from Oslo as a whole. The number of leisure and youth clubs run by the district and the number of open hours per inhabitant are above the average for all of Oslo's districts.

## **The district's allocations, recommendations and grants for recreational programmes (Chapter 3)**

The analysis of the district's allocations, recommendations and grants for 2019–2020 shows that of among the 70 different groups providing permanent or organised leisure activities in the district, three volunteer organization or associations in particular (KIGO, Tøyen Sports Club and Sterling Clubhouse) have received funding for inclusion and integration measures. In addition, the district has prioritised allocations to its own leisure activities, especially within the geographic boundaries of the community improvement initiative known as Områdeløftet. An analysis of the status of allocations, recommendations and grants suggests that

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the district's responsibility is limited mainly to operation of the district's leisure activities and youth clubs, cafes and clubhouses and does little to cover more general efforts to promote the inclusion of children and young people in leisure activities. Moreover, there is a substantial focus on episodic volunteerism and cooperation with volunteer organization or associations, which presents a challenge as they often lack the capacity to assume more responsibility. Based on the selection of partners, recommendations and allocations, it appears that less effort has gone towards cooperation with the large, professional NGOs. These three measures, among many others, are crucial for the successful operation of sustainable leisure activities and the inclusion of children and young people in order to reach the goals in the Leisure activity Declaration (Fritidserklæringen).

#### **Measures to promote the inclusion of children and young people in the district's leisure activities (Chapter 4)**

The district's digital overview, the Ung i BGO app, mainly provides information about the district's own leisure activities rather than presenting the range of leisure activities in the district. The app is primarily used by employees in the district, then by young people and occasionally by parents. According to survey responses and informant interviews, the app is not perceived to be particularly user-friendly or intuitive for finding relevant information. This also applies to the information about the district's various support schemes for the inclusion of children and young people, such as the possibility to apply for activity grants, activity cards and the like, and to find the contact information for the district's point-of-contact function or the lower secondary schools' activity and leisure activities coordinators.

#### **Primary school parents and lower secondary school pupils' participation in and familiarity with leisure activities (Chapter 5)**

The response rate in the survey of parents (N=116) with primary schoolchildren in the sub-districts of Tøyen and Grønland has been low (12%) despite the implementation of numerous measures, translation of the survey into several languages, use of 'ambassadors' to encourage participation and conducting of the survey in the schools. The majority of parents who responded to the survey lived in Tøyen and had children in Tøyen School (N=58), but parents with children in Vahl School (N=24) and Gamlebyen School (N=31) took part as well. The sub-districts of Grønland and Tøyen are encompassed by the Inner East Oslo Initiative (Oslo Indre Øst-satsningen), which includes the Områdeløftet initiative for Grønland and Tøyen. Parents with children at schools in Tøyen and Vahl reside within the geographic boundaries of the Områdeløftet initiative, but parents and their chil-

dren who attend Gamlebyen School are not included in the target group for the initiative.

The sample of lower secondary school pupils (N=322) in the district's two lower secondary schools (1056 pupils in total) was limited to year 10 at Fyrstikkalleen School (N=74), but all years at Jordal School (N=248) were included. The response rate for the pupils in year 10 (N=161) was satisfactory, but not for year 9 (N=63) or year 8 (N=98), as these years at Fyrstikkalleen School did not complete the survey.

The pupils in the survey reported living in all parts of the district, especially the sub-districts of Etterstad/Helsfyr and Bryn (23%), but also in Vålerenga (17%), Tøyen including Enerhaugen (15%), Gamlebyen (14%), Kampen (13%) and Ensjø (13%). The proportion of youth who reported Grønland (6%) as their place of residence was lower than expected. Therefore, about two in ten young people within the target group for the Områdeløftet initiative in Grønland took part in the survey.

*Participation in leisure activities at Activity House K1* is somewhat low among both primary and lower secondary school pupils. Many parents knew about the children's choir at the youth activity centre Forandringshuset and the youth café Central Park, likely because most of the parents who responded to the survey live in Tøyen. Participation in leisure and youth clubs, cafes and clubhouses among primary and lower secondary school pupils shows that one in three children and young people use those, but this proportion has decreased, probably due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The most widely known leisure club is the Jordal Leisure Club, but the district's own K1 Club is also well known. One to two out of ten lower secondary school pupils know about the activities located in the Områdeløftet area in Grønland, such as the Grønland Youth Club, the Sterling Clubhouse, the youth activity centres Fellesverket and Forandringshuset, as well as the district's own Riverside and Central Park in Tøyen. The pupils were also familiar with Junior G and the JOY Junior Club and Grønland Youth Club, all of which are based at Vahl School. Nabolagshuset Petersborg is little known or used, but this is to be expected as it opened in July 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Biblo Youth Library is the programme best known among primary school parents.

*Difference in the proportion of users in the district's leisure activities and youth clubs, cafes and clubhouses.* Gamle Oslo District's own Jordal Leisure Club accounts for a majority of the use among the various leisure and youth clubs. Jordal is used by one-third of the young people, and one-third have previously taken part in the club. The K1 Club is used by one in ten primary schoolchildren in the sub-districts of Tøyen and Grønland, but almost one in three young people have participated in the past. Central Park is used by a minority of lower secondary school pupils, and the situation is similar for Grønland Youth Club, Sterling Clubhouse,

Fellesverket, Forandringshuset and Riverside. Therefore, the leisure activities in the sub-districts of Tøyen and Grønland benefit a limited number of children and young people and do not reach children and young people in other areas of the district. Moreover, primary school-children's participation is low in leisure activities in Tøyen and Grønland, such as the K1 Club in Tøyen, Junior G, JOY Junior Club and the Sterling Clubhouse all based at Vahl School. Participation in these leisure activities may be slightly higher among children from immigrant families, whom we believe had a low survey response rate. Recreation and youth clubs, cafes and clubhouses have reduced their activities, resulting in a decrease in participation and number of visits between autumn 2019 and autumn 2020.

*Participation in outdoor activities* is significantly higher among primary school-children in the sub-districts of Tøyen and Grønland than among lower secondary school pupils. Outdoor activities appear to have been less affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The most well-known outdoor programme among primary school parents in the sub-districts of Grønland and Tøyen and among lower secondary school pupils in the district as a whole is the FRIGO Centre for outdoor activities with its BUA equipment loan scheme.

Participation in sports among primary schoolchildren in the sub-districts of Tøyen and Grønland is higher than among lower secondary school pupils. In 2020, one in three lower secondary school pupils participated in sports, but we assume that the proportion declined somewhat in 2020 on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most well-known sports programme among lower secondary school pupils at Jordal School was the school's own athletic activities, basketball and wrestling. Generally speaking for both lower secondary schools, the most well-known sports clubs were Vålerenga Multi-Sports Club, Oslo Boxing Club, Tøyen Sports Club, Tøyen Tae Kwon Do Club and Oslo Karate Club. Not surprisingly, the most popular sports are ball sports (football, handball, basketball and cricket), combat sports (boxing and Tae kwon do), and track and field.

*Participation in activities organised by religious organisations* among pupils seems to be lower than in previous years. The activities are better known among employees than among parents and young people, and the homework help service is the best known. One in ten lower secondary school pupils take part in a music or arts programme, and it does not appear that the proportion has decreased even with the COVID-19 pandemic. The most well-known music and arts leisure activity schools in the district are KIGO and the Oslo School of the Arts. Almost one in ten take part in a band, choir or orchestra, but participation declines through primary school and lower secondary school. The most well-known band, choir and orchestra are the Kampen School's marching band, the St. Hallvard Boys' Choir, the Tøyen orchestra and the Vålerenga School's marching band. Participation in these declines after primary school.

*Voluntary work* by lower secondary school pupils in organisations such as political parties, relief agencies and the like was significantly lower than in 2018, and is now at about one in ten. It is unclear to what extent the decline in participation was due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

*Gender as a factor in participation in leisure activities* – More boys take part in leisure and youth clubs and sports, while more girls participate in arts and music schools, bands, choirs and orchestras, as well as in leisure activities organised by religious organisations. The proportion of girls that stop participating as the years pass is larger than that of boys.

*General analysis of participation in leisure activities* – In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the proportion of lower secondary school pupils that participate is quite high, almost two in three. One-third of the primary schoolchildren and two in ten lower secondary school pupils take part in leisure activities outside of the districts. The Municipal of Gamle Oslo District, professional NGOs, and local volunteer organization or associations seem to have worked hard to keep their activities running and the leisure activities available to children and young people by alternative means during the pandemic.

*Leisure and youth clubs, cafes and clubhouses are located* in the sub-districts of Tøyen and Grønland, especially within the geographic boundaries of the Områdeløftet initiative. Nine of the eleven aforementioned leisure and youth clubs, cafes and clubhouses are located in these two sub-districts, which also seem to compete for the same children and young people when use is restricted. About one in 100 children and young people use these facilities, compared with one in three young people who are members of the Jordal Leisure Club. In addition, the four primary school leisure activities, all located within the geographic boundaries of the Områdeløftet initiative, seem to compete for the same group of children. Except for the recently established Nabolagshuset Petersborg in Ensjø and the Jordal Leisure Club, however, there are no leisure activities available for children or young people who are associated with Fyrstikkalleen School or for those who live in other sub-districts.

*Other leisure activities are located* mainly in the sub-districts of Ensjø, Kampen, Vålerenga, Tøyen and Grønland, and are less available in other sub-districts within Gamle Oslo District.

*Information about, access to and the quality of the leisure activities* – Schools and friends are the most important source of information about leisure activities, followed by family members or parents' own children, and social media. Websites for the leisure activities are also an important source of information for parents. Less than half of lower secondary school pupils know about the Ung I BGO app, and those who are familiar with it learned about it through their school or friends. A minority of parents know about the app, and where parents get information from is entirely random.

About half of the parents are not satisfied with the district's information about the leisure in Gamle Oslo District and feel that they lack an overview. Only one in ten young people feel they have an overview of the district's leisure activities, which is important for their ability to find other or new activities. The majority of lower secondary school pupils are somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the leisure activities, but the parents are slightly more satisfied than the young people. The number of lower secondary school pupils who are satisfied with their local community has increased since 2018.

Would primary school parents and lower secondary school pupils like to have other kinds of leisure activities? Parents feel that the Biblo Youth Library and the Oslo Public Library Deichman, Tøyen Sports Club and the sports facility Tøyen Arena work well. What does not work well is the lack of information, and they would prefer to receive both the information and the offer of activities through the school. Moreover, they would like to see leisure activities offered outside of the geographic boundaries of the Områdeløftet initiative, such as in Gamlebyen. While lower secondary school pupils do not think programmes in the district are wanting, parents miss the Tøyen swimming facility and would like to see more spaces in the Oslo School of the Arts and other kinds of activities such as Mine-craft, a Lego-building club, drama, board games or chess.

Lack of participation among children and drop-out among lower secondary school pupils – Parents believe that the lack of participation among primary schoolchildren is mainly caused by inadequate information about the leisure activities and support schemes from the district, as well as by the leisure activities being located in Tøyen and Grønland within the geographic boundaries of the Områdeløftet initiative. Parents and young people who do not live there regard these leisure activities as difficult to access. Drop-out from the leisure activities among lower secondary school pupils (N=146) is associated with several factors: 1) they grow tired of the activity and become bored, 2) they develop other interests/quit in order to focus on just one activity, but a different one, 3) they feel they do not have enough time, either due to pressure at school or a desire to spend more of their time on school and friends, 4) they quit because their friends quit, 5) they feel they have outgrown the programme or quit as a result of a natural move away from leisure activities for primary school-children. The lower secondary school pupils (N=322) put the most emphasis on their desire to prioritise other things, and factors such as poor programme quality and finances are regarded as relatively unimportant. Slightly more than half of the pupils are familiar with their local school's recreation and activities coordinator, who can help to prevent drop-out both from school itself and from participation in leisure activities and encourage inclusion in new leisure activities.

## **Employees' familiarity with leisure activities and challenges related to in the district (Chapter 6)**

There has been a low survey response rate among employees in services that have daily contact with parents in families, such as the child welfare service and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), and this makes the raw data rather uncertain in this instance. The most well-known leisure activities among employees are those run by the district itself, while leisure activities offered by pro-fessional NGOs, and local voluntary organization or associations are less familiar. Employees obtain information about leisure activities from their colleagues and other employees in the district as well as from social media and community leaders. Two-thirds knew about the Ung i BGO app, but they found out about it by chance.

Satisfaction with the information about leisure activities from the district was low. About half felt that they did not have an overview of the leisure activities or the participation support schemes. The district's challenges seen from the employees' perspective reflect the same challenges as those described by the parents them-selves: a lack of easily available and comprehensive information, limited finances, the district's focus on leisure activities that do not require a firm commitment, poor quality and accessibility of the sports arenas, as well as the location and centralisation of the district's own leisure, and inadequate coordination. The employees believe there is too much of a silo mentality in the work with leisure activities in the district and inadequate coordination between providers in the public and professional NGOs, and local voluntary organization or associations.

## **Different perspectives on leisure activities – providers and services (Chapter 7)**

Professional NGOs want to be regarded as a resource rather than as a competitor in the district, and this would give the target groups a greater variety of leisure activities, fewer similar leisure activities and more long-term programme funding. Employees, especially those in the schools, think that the short-term nature of the funding of activities is a problem, and they recruit children and young people primarily to leisure activities that have predictability and continuity. Ensuring that parents receive information can be challenging because they are not present in the arenas where the information is provided. Poor language skills and cultural differences also represent barriers. Employees in the services find it particularly challenging to administer the scheme Allocation of funding to activities for children and young people in the district when they have no knowledge of the family's financial situation. Employees feel that activities in close proximity to or on the school grounds increase the likelihood that parents and their children will know about them and use them. Moreover, employees

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believe that less emphasis should be put on creating new leisure activities and more effort should go towards improving the quality of the that already exist and have a large number of participants. The FRIGO Recreation Centre and website are said to be exemplary, and the informants think that FRIGO can serve as a model for other providers, as the information is conveyed in a straightforward way and the activities' content is clearly described.

Upper secondary school pupils' and young adults' perspectives on re-cruitment and drop-out from leisure activities (Chapter 8)

Friends and school are also the most important recruitment channels for leisure activities for upper secondary school pupils and young adults, and a leisure activities appeal seems to be especially dependent on its popularity among a pupil's group of friends and whether the leisure activities is perceived to be interesting or boring as well as the pupil's sense of having outgrown the leisure activities. The focus on sports that begins in earnest in lower secondary school has a role in pushing many young people into inactivity. The young people want physical activity combined with socialising and fun rather than performance and competition. They also want to be able to direct some of the activities themselves. Upper secondary school pupils and young adults believe there is a gap in the kinds of activities offered to pupils in lower secondary school, especially to those who do not want to play sports at a high level and those with no friends or for some other reason do not seek out activities by themselves. A particular contribution from the young people in the analysis is their own perspective on the preferred new, but already tested models that can help to prevent pupils from being left out of leisure activities and to recruit pupils to new leisure activities when they reach lower secondary school age.

## **Recommendations**

We were asked to give recommendations as part of this assignment. The starting point for the district was to investigate whether the leisure activities in the district meet the needs of the children and young people who live there. The results for participation show that the young people would like to have more clubs and permanent organised leisure activities. However, the district believes that they already offer a wide variety of leisure activities, but they are uncertain whether the leisure activities meet the needs of the children and young people. In summary, our study shows that leisure activities for young people within the geographic boundary of the Om-rådeløftet initiative are plentiful, but the location seems to create a competition for users. In other sub-districts, however, there are too few leisure activities. To conclude, we set out a range of recommendations based on the data we have collected and our assessments.

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### ***Initiative for a general activities and leisure activities coordinator/point-of-contact coordinator***

In order to achieve the goals of the Leisure activities Declaration, we recommend appointing a full-time leisure activity n coordinator or a point-of-contact coordinator whose contact information is easily accessible on the district's website. The postholder would take an integrated approach to measures that promote the inclusion of children and young people in leisure activities and cooperate both internally between the district's services and externally with professional NGOs, and local voluntary organization or associations in order to bring more professionalism to the district's own efforts as well as to the leisure and youth clubs. Furthermore, the postholder would follow up recommendations from employees, providers, parents and the young people themselves and the recommendations described below.

### ***Requirement for cooperating providers to provide good-quality online information about their leisure activities***

We recommend that Gamle Oslo District requires professional NGOs, the local voluntary organization or associations of leisure activities (i.e. those that the district collaborates with or allocates public funding to) to provide easily accessible, transparent and regularly updated information about their activities on their own web-sites and to have easy-to-use registration systems in place. Facebook and Instagram can be reserved for more internal information about the leisure activities.

### ***Joint online information portal and use of Instagram etc. for all programmes in the district***

We recommend that a joint online information portal is set up for all 'permanent and organised leisure activities' for children and young people and that this is updated on a regular basis. The young people recommend that leisure activities providers and the district use a wider range of shared information channels where all young people can find out about their leisure activities; Instagram can be especially useful for generating interest in the activity. This work can require significant time and resources, but the information portal could also be used by employees in the schools, NAV, the child welfare service, the service for children and young people, leisure activities providers, parents, children and the young people themselves. Consideration should also be given to whether the information should be supplemented with translated and/or visual information in the main languages spoken by the immigrant parents who live in Gamle Oslo District.

### ***More cooperation with professional NGOs for coordination and funding***

To ensure sustainable leisure activities for the most at-risk children and young people in the district, we recommend that the district prioritises cooperation with professional NGOs. Together with the district, the professional NGOs can collaborate on projects with the local voluntary organization or associations in order to develop grant proposals. This type of collaboration has a greater chance of succeeding in the competition for state funding or of receiving grants from private actors, which will increase the potential to coordinate, professionalise and ensure sustainability in the leisure activities.

### ***More cooperation with schools for cohesive, active information strategies***

We recommend that the district improves its strategies for ensuring that information on activities reaches all primary and lower secondary school pupils and their parents by increasing cooperation with the schools. The professional NGOs propose that they, in cooperation with the district and each school, organise a 'leisure activities day' where the district's providers advertise their leisure activities at stands on the school grounds together with the local voluntary organization or associations. The young people recommend that young role models, preferably members who are three to four years older, be responsible for providing information for the various activities at the schools, preferably in each class. They also suggest that teachers take their pupils to visit the programme providers so they can try out the various activities offered by and within the district as well as by the professional NGOs, and the local voluntary organization or associations.

### ***Recommendations for the inclusion of children and young people not participating in leisure activities***

According to the young people, few children and young people will show up alone at a leisure activities without their friends, at an unfamiliar location. To gain insight into the interests of all pupils and to be able to offer leisure activities to all of them, a survey of their interests should be conducted in the schools and activities should be organised by the schools. Elvebakken Upper Secondary School employs a model in which the school has a wide variety of clubs based on what the pupils want and it seeks to include young people in activities with like-minded peers, such as a chess club, in order to promote social inclusion. The young people say they would like to see other upper and lower secondary schools benefit from this model as well.

According to the upper secondary school pupils and young adults, teachers in the lower secondary schools should be more involved in the development and establishment of leisure activities, like they are in primary schools. The young

people are concerned about inclusion, and they believe that school is an important place to succeed in this since everyone attends school, regardless of whether or not they have friends.

Activities organised by lower and upper secondary schools should also ensure that information about the leisure activities reaches all children and young people so that individual pupils are not dependent on a large network or group of friends to get the information. Proximity to the activities will increase attendance, as will the pupils' sense of safety about their surroundings and familiarity with the other pupils who are participating.

Moreover, the young people believe that leisure clubs can play a more active role in informing and including children with few or no friends. One way to do this is to invite entire classes to the club so that pupils can try out the activity and become familiar with the situation – including with the employees who work there.

### ***Combination of paid and voluntary work for young people***

Upper secondary school pupils want a combination of recreational leisure activities and voluntary/paid jobs and seem to think this is important. This would give them useful work experience and a sense of accomplishment.

More trainee jobs and jobs at recreational leisure clubs for young people are sought. More jobs (voluntary and paid) for young people in recreational activities are thought to increase the participation of children in sports. Jobs in leisure activities can help to include young people with no friends and build up their social network.