

IMPACT REPORT

2024

Changing the lives of young people





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OUR MISSION

We empower young people to reach their potential by providing the skills, qualifications and support needed to find work and shape successful futures.

Our transformative programmes are designed to empower young people by providing them with high-quality mentoring, employability guidance and sports sessions.

Our vision is to create a level playing field where every young person has the opportunity to create a better future for themselves.

OUR VALUES

CHANGING LIVES

QUALITY

TEAM

PROGRESSIVE

WELCOME

We are so proud to share Sport 4 Life UK's impact throughout 2023/24, highlighting the incredible journeys of the young people we support.

In today's world, many young people face significant challenges, from educational pressures to social and economic uncertainties. For those from disadvantaged and ethnically diverse backgrounds, these hurdles can feel overwhelming.

In the education setting, unauthorised absences have doubled since 2018, and permanent exclusions have increased by half. Meanwhile, GCSE results have declined over the last five years, reflecting the growing challenges in our education system. Beyond school, the unemployment rate for under-25s remains three times higher than for the general population, and the number of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET) has spiked to over 800,000 since the pandemic.

Our own research, Understanding the Realities Faced by Disadvantaged Youth, echoes these national challenges and underscores the urgent need for targeted support to help young people navigate these uncertainties.

However, behind every challenge lies an opportunity for growth, resilience, and transformation. We see the personal stories behind the statistics—stories of determination, ambition, and hope. Every young person we work with inspires us to remain committed to our mission of empowering them with the skills, confidence, and support they need to build successful futures.

Over the past year, we've had the privilege of meaningfully supporting well over two thousand young people on their journeys. Through our programmes, many have experienced positive changes in their life skills, mental well-being, and educational engagement. Each of these young individuals is a testament to the power of targeted support and community collaboration.

As we look to the future, we are excited to continue expanding our reach and enhancing our services. Our partnerships with schools, businesses, and local organisations are crucial to our success, enabling us to create impactful, life-changing experiences that truly centre on the needs of young people.

As we embark on a new chapter, we are committed to deepening our impact and enabling even more young people to realise their potential through the support of our dedicated partners.



Tom Clarke-Forrest
Founder & CEO



Mike Gahir
Chair of Trustees

Thank you to all those who have engaged, supported, and partnered with us over the last year. We hope you can be part of this continued and exciting journey.



Don's patience and support during mentoring made him someone I could trust. He was my biggest fan, especially during times of self-doubt, and I will always be grateful for that.

Finn, 20



WHY WE EXIST

More children and young people are living in poverty and disadvantage than ever before.

The number of children growing up in poverty is rising, with over 4.3 million children across the UK living in poverty. The situation is even more dire in the West Midlands, where 39% of children are affected—30% higher than the national average.

In Birmingham alone, 51% of children under 16 reside in the 10% most deprived areas. The challenges are more pronounced for young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds, who are 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty and are more likely to live in the most deprived areas.

The West Midlands has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the UK, with 38.4% of children living in poverty compared to 29.2% nationally.



By the time they reach school, they are already behind their peers and significantly more likely to leave without good qualifications.

Unauthorised absences have doubled since 2018, permanent exclusions have risen by a half, and GCSE results have fallen in the five-year period from 2018 to 2023.

The education gap for disadvantaged children is stark. By age 16, these pupils are, on average, 19 months behind their peers in academic achievement—equivalent to nearly 1.5 academic years.

Disadvantaged young people are also significantly more likely to fail their core GCSEs, with 61% failing English and Maths, compared to just 34% of their peers.

For those who are excluded from mainstream education, the future looks even bleaker; 95% of these pupils fail their core GCSEs in alternative provision.



As young people transition out of education, they face the very real prospect of being long-term NEET.

During their transition out of education, young people are at increased risk of developing mental health issues, and being unable to bridge the gap between themselves and their peers. Despite a gradual decrease in overall unemployment, the rate for young people remains high. From January to March 2024, about 320,000 16-24-year-olds were NEET, up 11,000 from the previous year and 27,000 from the last quarter.

Three-quarters of NEET have been out of employment, education or training for at least 12 months. The situation is particularly dire in Birmingham and the West Midlands, with nearly 10,665 and more than 25,150 young people, respectively, claiming out-of-work benefits.

Those from under-resourced backgrounds are 50% more likely to be NEET than their peers, and 29% of young people without a Level 2 qualification face more than twice the risk of long-term NEET status (12 months or more).

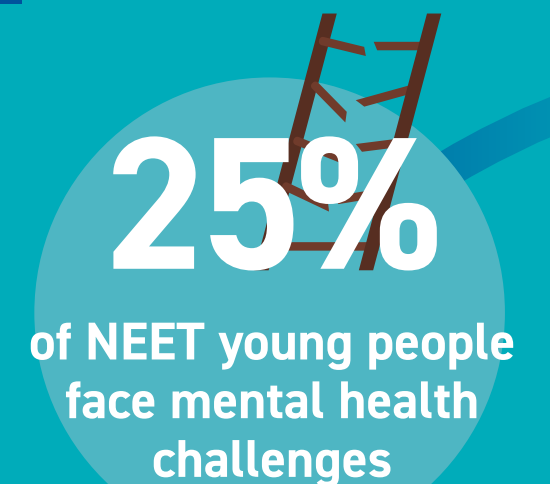


As a result, young people are more likely to be welfare dependent as they grow up.

They are also more at risk of experiencing wage scarring, developing mental health issues, and being unable to afford basic necessities. The unemployment rate is three times higher for under 25s. Even those in work continue to face challenges, with over 2m 18-24 year olds underemployed (in poorly paid or severely insecure work).

Young people who experience prolonged periods of unemployment are nearly 8 times more likely to become NEET again in the future.

There is also a significant overlap between NEET status and mental health challenges, with 25% of NEET young people experiencing a mental health condition. Less than half of young people report that their mental health is good, and over a quarter fear that poor mental health will prevent them from finding a job.



Reference: Youth Futures Foundation (2024), The Resolution Foundation (2022), Impetus (2020), Office of National Statistics (2023), Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019), House of Commons Library (2024), Birmingham Economic Review (2023), Education Policy Institute - Divergent Pathways (2016), Princes Trust - The Power of Potential Report (2022), The Food Foundation (2023)

WHAT WE DO

Our transformative programmes are designed to empower young people to reach their potential.

Our youth-led delivery model includes high-quality mentoring, employability guidance, accredited qualifications and training, youth-led social action projects, and sports sessions.

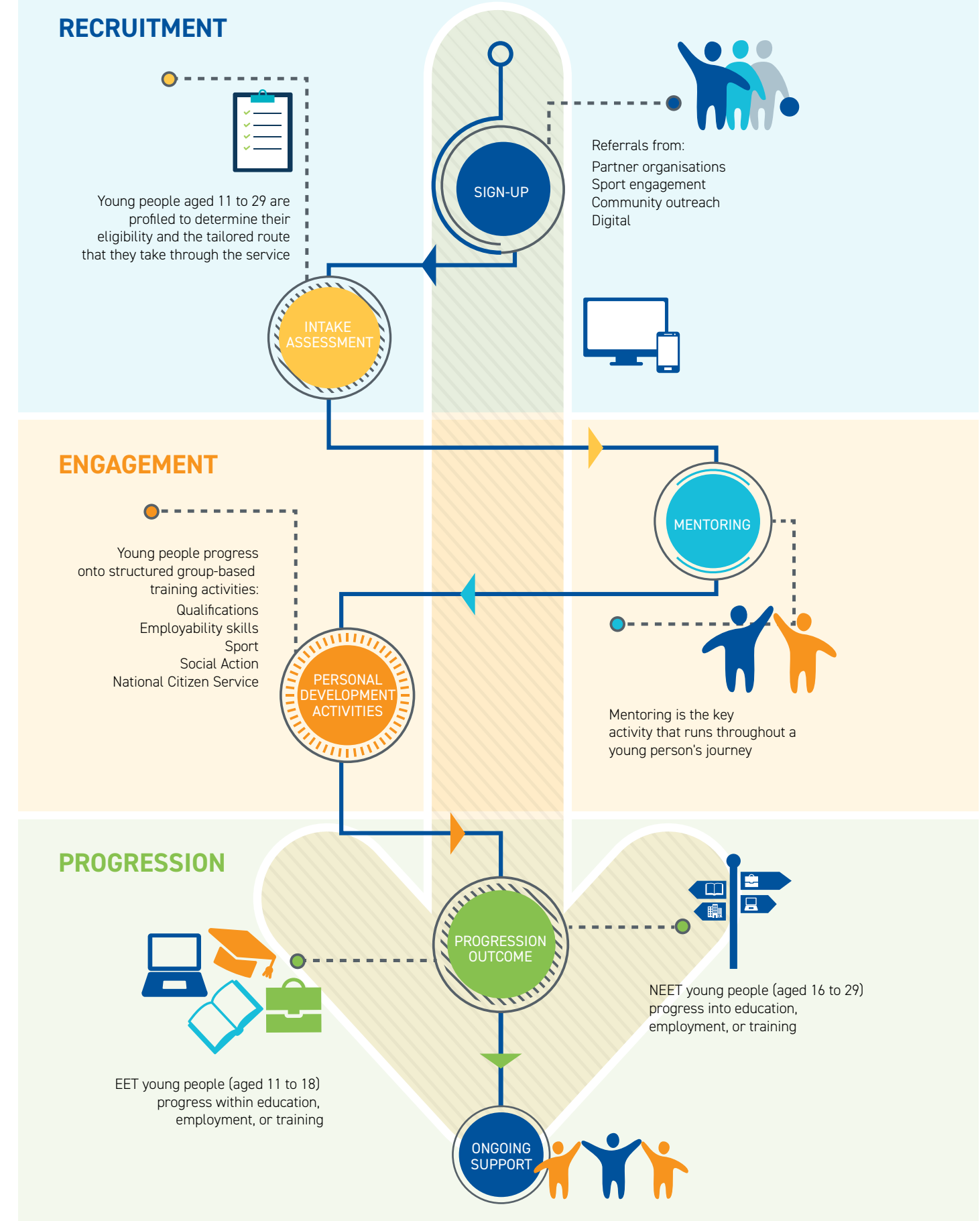
Young people can sign up for our services through various recruitment pathways, including partner referrals, sports engagement sessions, community outreach, or self-referral through our website.

Each young person has a tailored support programme to help them build confidence, gain qualifications and move into sustained education, employment, or training.

5,000+
hours
of sport, training
and mentoring support



Delivery Model



OUR IMPACT



Life Skills & Personal Development

1,206

of the young people we engaged with, experienced an improvement in their life skills

Employability

1,552

young people enrolled in our employability projects

Mental Health & Wellbeing

82%

of young people who completed a Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) survey reported an improvement in their wellbeing.

Education & Qualifications

476

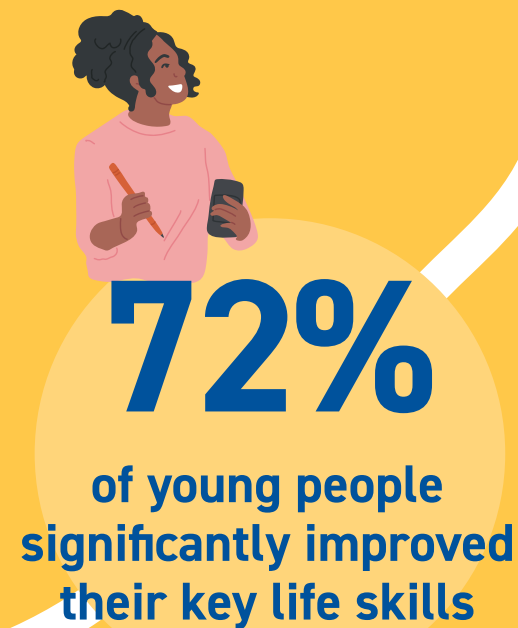
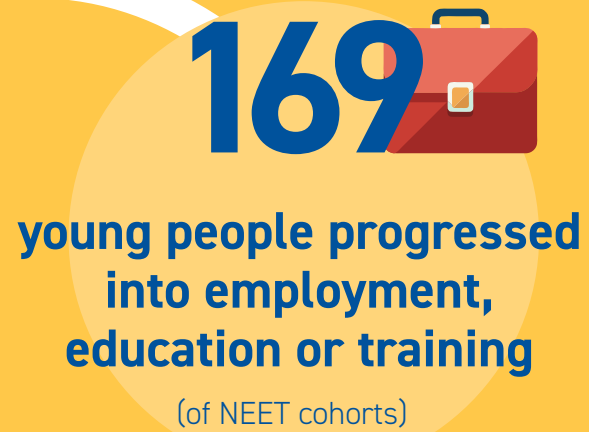
young people experienced a positive impact through our projects and went on to successfully complete a qualification

Crime & Anti Social Behaviour

596

young people exhibited positive changes in behaviours associated with crime

OUR IMPACT

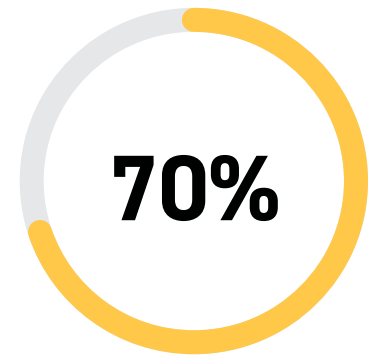


Demographics

66% Male

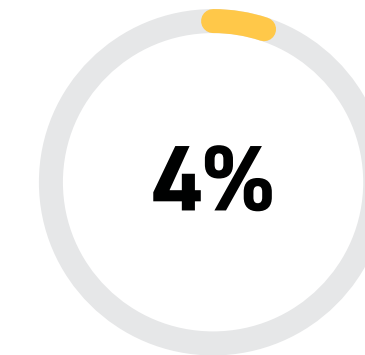
33% Female

1% Undisclosed, trans

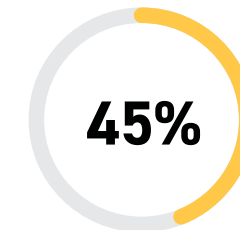


of young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds

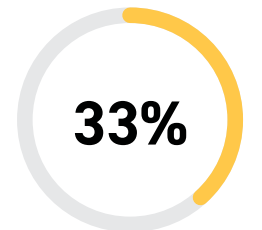
Disability/SEN



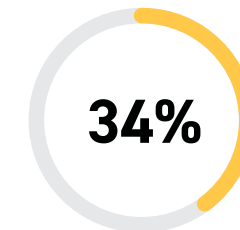
of engaged young people identified as having a disability



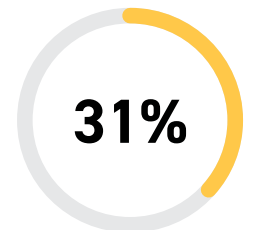
of young people affected by Learning disabilities



of young people affected by mental health disabilities



of young people affected by ADHD



of young people affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder

73% of disabled young people were male

26% of disabled young people were female

1% of disabled young people were transgender

Engagement

2,287 young people have been meaningfully supported

528 NEET

1,759 EET

2,021 attended employability activities

1,036 NEET

985 EET

1,349 attended sport

302 NEET

1,047 EET

29 into a work placement/volunteering

845 received 1-to-1 mentoring support

560 NEET

285 EET

502 completed a social action project

36 NEET

466 EET

Progression

476 gained an accredited qualification / completed accredited training

275 Sector Based Qualifications

112 L1 Sports Leaders

78 Young Leaders Award

6 L2 Sports Leaders

4 L1 Functional Skills

1 First Aid

273 are still enrolled in mentoring services

186 NEET

87 EET

1,180 completed



1,206 young people significantly* improved their life skills



169 progressed into EET

(87 into employment, 82 into education and training)



856 young people significantly improved their employability skills

NEET: Not in Education, Employment, or Training | EET: (In) Education, Employment, or Training | NCS: National Citizens Service

*50%+ improvement

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

Our services for secondary schools have been proven to increase attainment, attendance, positive behaviour, engagement and increase aspirations.

1,572
pupils supported across 49 schools

182
pupils in 31 schools received 1-2-1 mentoring programmes



5 employability workshops to 740 pupils



5 Sport Leadership qualifications in schools



8 NCS programmes to 420 pupils



The support that Sport 4 Life UK Mentors offered to students across the Titan Network was invaluable. The nature of the one-to-one mentoring meant sessions could be tailored to each student to support them with their post-16 transition.

Jas Rohel, CEO at Titan Partnership



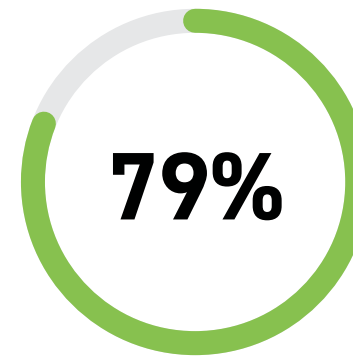
I can't thank Karl enough for everything he has done for me. I will shout it from the rooftops if I have to.

Callum



AWARD-WINNING EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Schools have reported back that out of the 182 pupils that received mentoring support and completed surveys, 88.5% have improved in at least one of key areas: attendance, engagement, or attainment during the course of the mentoring programme.



of pupils demonstrated a significant improvement in their life skills



increased awareness of what they want to do next in education.

60% of students improved attainment

53% of students improved attendance

64% of students improved their behaviour and engagement in lessons

88.5% of students improved at least one of the above



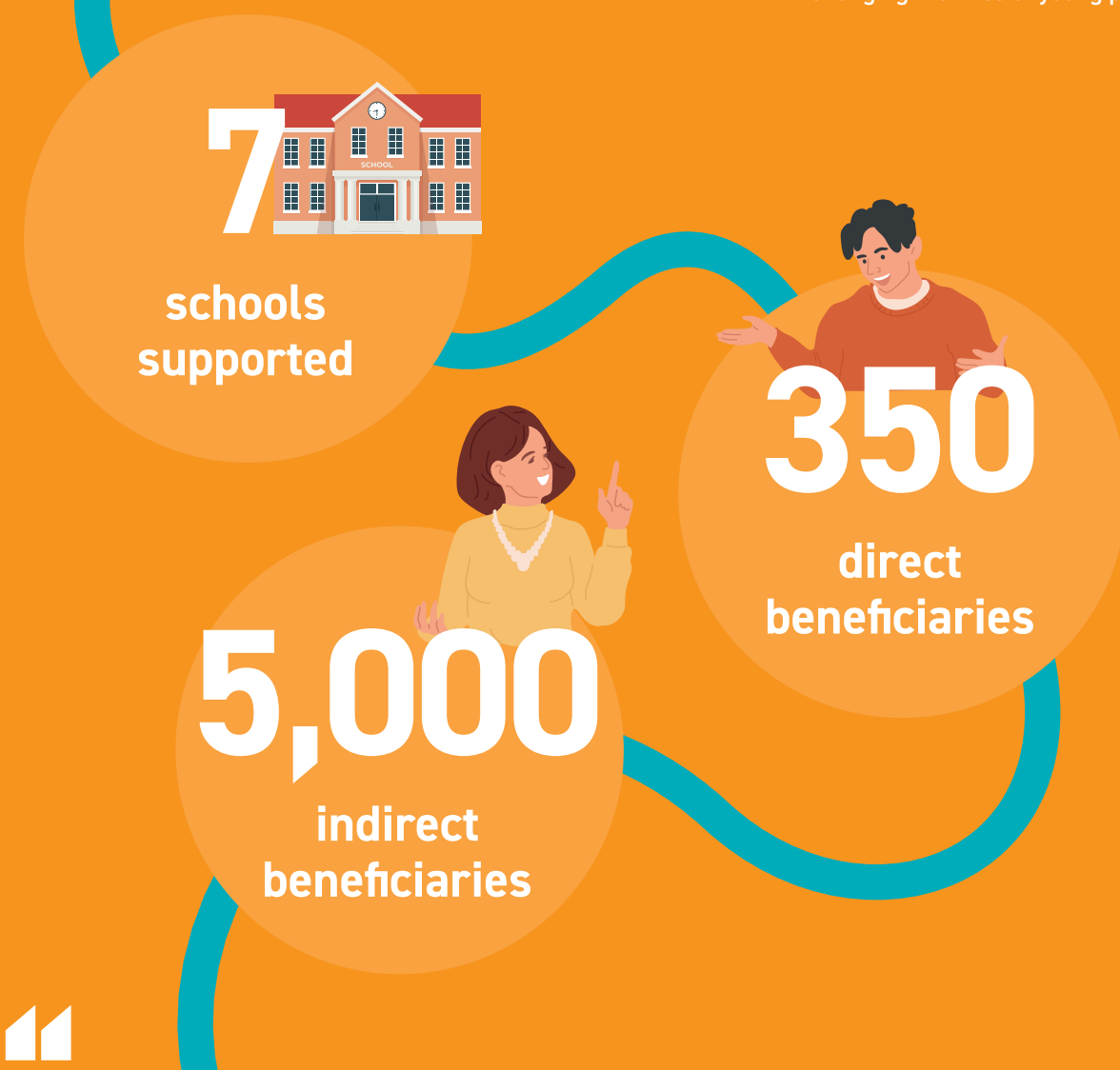
STEP TOGETHER

This year, Sport 4 Life UK proudly continued as a key delivery partner for Step Together, a pioneering national pilot funded by the Home Office and spearheaded locally by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership.

The programme focuses on increasing safety and reducing violent crime along designated school routes, safeguarding young people during their daily commutes.

By December 2023, we successfully delivered Step Together in West Brom, North Solihull, Cape Hill, and Oldbury, directly supporting seven schools. Our Youth Engagement Officers not only reduced anti-social behaviour but also fostered positive relationships with the students, contributing to a more secure and connected community.

Thanks to a generous £60,000 grant from Masonic, we will extend our work until 2026, focusing on three key school routes in Sandwell. This initiative will directly benefit 350 children and young people, with an estimated 5,000 others indirectly impacted through safer environments and enhanced community engagement.



I'm very pleased we've been able to help Sport 4 Life UK and support the essential work they are doing in our community. Serious youth violence can have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of, not just the young people directly involved, but also in an indirect manner to those around them. This charity are taking on a critical role in engaging with disadvantaged young people.

John Lockley (Head of Staffordshire Freemasons)



IMPACT PARTNERS

Together, we're magnifying our collective impact and making a real difference in the lives of young people. Through our strategic support, we help our Impact Partners enhance their planning, assess their impact, and strengthen governance, ensuring that our shared mission is achieved with lasting results.

Through our 'Impact Partner Model' we are collaborating with more and more organisations that share our vision. Together, we aim to magnify our collective impact and transform lives.



In year 1, Sport 4 Life UK has delivered the following outputs:

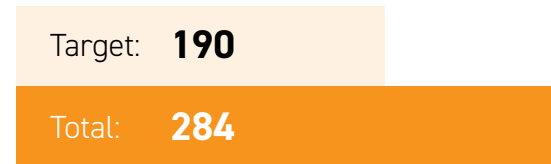
£60,000 provided to partners (4 x £15,000) for new delivery

7 'Capacity Building' sessions delivered

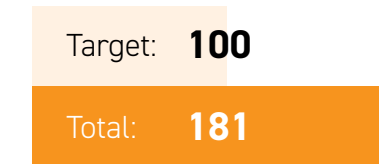
2 'Sports Leaders UK' qualification courses provided to Inspire Group CIC and Pat Benson participants

Impact Partner Outcomes (enabled by Sport 4 Life)

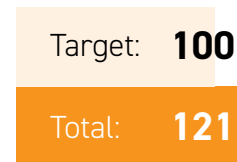
No. of young people engaged



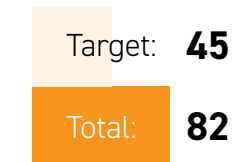
No. of sport sessions delivered



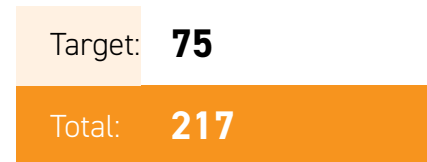
No. of development sessions (non-sport) delivered



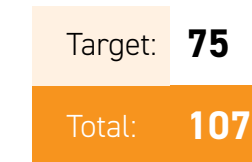
No. of qualifications gained



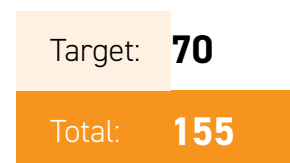
No. of young people that transformed key life skills



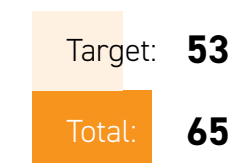
No. of young people that improved mental health & wellbeing



No. of young people that improved employability skills



No. of young people progressing NEET to EET (employment, education, training)



THANK YOU

These are just some of the organisations we have been supported by and delivered projects in collaboration with.

Together, we're magnifying our collective impact and making a real difference in the lives of young people. Through our strategic support, we help our Impact Partners enhance their planning, assess their impact, and strengthen governance, ensuring that our shared mission is achieved with lasting results.



We are very grateful to all our partners, funders and supporters for your continued drive to change the lives of young people.



When partnering with Sport 4 Life UK, we knew they were well equipped to support our purpose in our Midlands region. We have cafés in Birmingham with fantastic teams that have supported the hospitality skills days delivered in our cafés. We have been lucky to work with a range of young people through Sport 4 Life UK.

Tiffany Messer Smart, Head of People (Boston Tea Party)



Sport 4 Life UK helped me find a purpose. They helped me find a job that helps keep people safe – that gives me a solid purpose.

Connor



WATCH CONNOR'S STORY HERE

CHANGING LIVES

Connor's story - Age 22

Connor left sixth form without a clear plan, unsure of his future and struggling to find stable income to support his family. That's when he turned to Sport 4 Life UK and met Don, a mentor who would guide him over the next 12 months.

Despite having qualifications in performing arts and mechanics, Connor found it difficult to progress due to challenges with theoretical studies. Don saw his potential and helped him focus on his aspirations, particularly his desire to provide financial security for his family.

Together, they worked towards an SIA qualification, a crucial step toward Connor's dream job in security. With Don's support, Connor not only earned his qualification but also secured a part-time security job, bringing stability and a healthier routine to his life.

Beyond employment, Sport 4 Life UK helped Connor develop public speaking, interviewing, and CV writing skills, fostering personal and professional growth. His advice to others? "Try it. What's the worst that can happen? You won't regret making a conscious effort to be better."

OUR PRIORITIES

All that we do is focused on **CHANGING** the **LIVES** of young people.

This is our North Star and guides everything that we do. This sits central to our priorities for the next year and our 5 year strategic plan. As the West Midlands leading sport for employment charity, we want to continue to be bold and ambitious.

Over the next 5 years, our strategic priorities are;

- ✓ **To grow and expand our services**
- ✓ **To drive through transformational improvements in our services**
- ✓ **To be the 'go to' youth employment charity for the region**
- ✓ **To be one of the best places to work in the West Midlands**
- ✓ **To make key contributions to our society and community**

This means that over the next year (2024-2025), we will;

- Review our qualifications offer to ensure they best meet the needs of the young people we serve
- Grow our services to new areas of the West Midlands and align with partners who share our vision and values
- Continue to grow our Impact Partner model and enable more young people nationally
- Expand our work with Job centres and become more insight driven
- Continue our progress and development in EDI
- Continue our growth as an organisation - operationally (supporting more young people), financially and geographically
- Build on our Investors In People accreditation and continue to make work better for our people
- Create a new Brand video to increase engagement and awareness of the work we do





When I think of Sport 4 Life UK, I think of a safe space. Somewhere I can build skills, network, meet new people and build connections with people who are going to push me to achieve big things in life.

Bano



0121 456 1818
contact@sport4life.org.uk
sport4life.org.uk



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