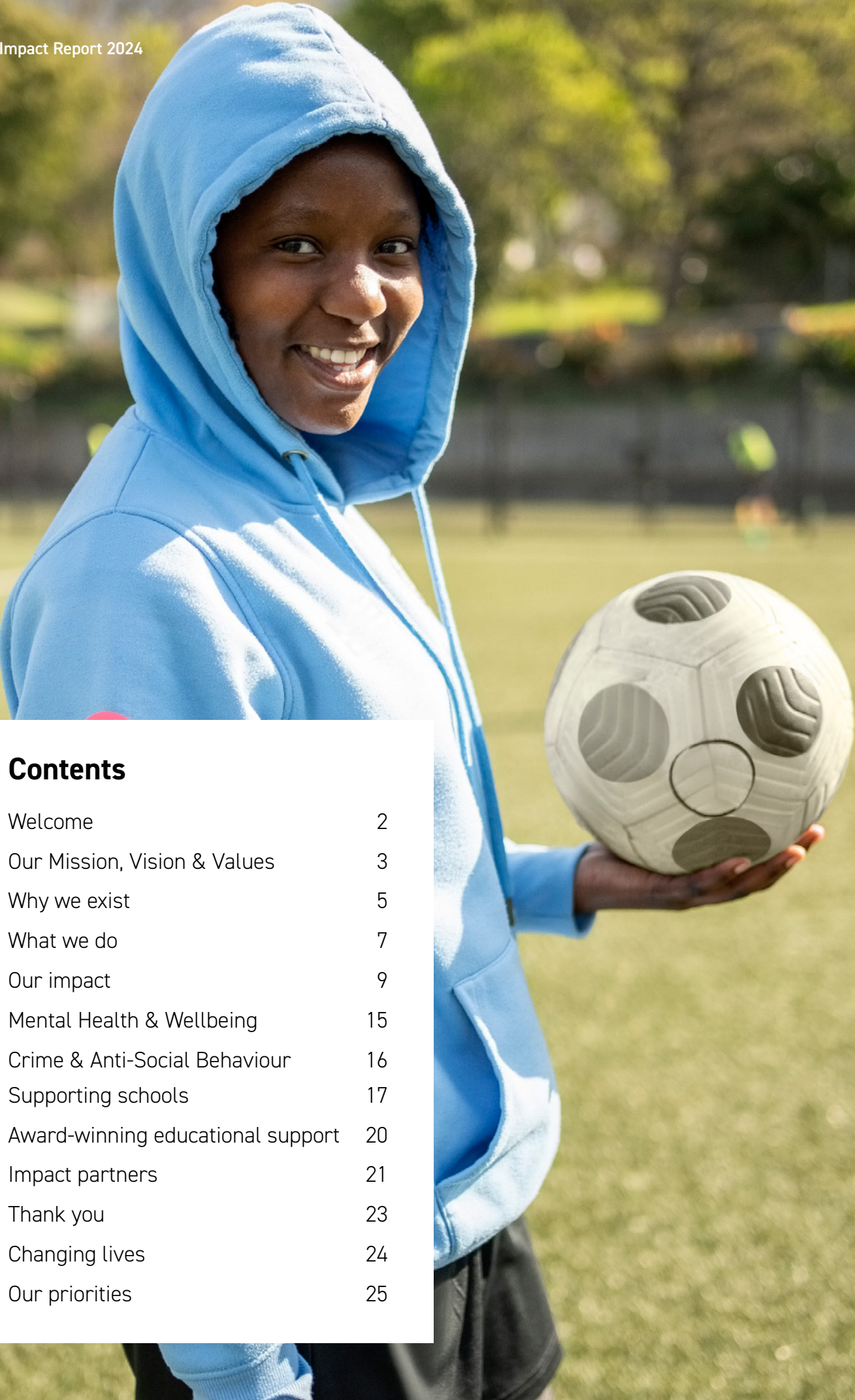


IMPACT REPORT

2025

Changing the lives of young people





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WELCOME

We're incredibly proud to share Sport 4 Life UK's 2025 Impact Report, highlighting our outcomes, impact, partnerships, and stories from across the 2024/25 year.

Sadly, many young people still face significant challenges. In education, attendance and attainment are falling, while exclusions are on the rise. After leaving school, the picture doesn't improve - youth unemployment remains stubbornly high, three times greater than the rate for all working-age adults, and economic inactivity follows a similar trend. Even those in work often face insecure or low-paid jobs, with two million 18 to 24 year olds underemployed.

These issues are compounded by other social pressures - worsening mental health, the cost of living crisis, and limited access to networks or meaningful work experience - making it harder than ever for young people to build the futures they deserve. Our own research report, Understanding the Realities Faced by Disadvantaged Youth, echoes these national challenges and reinforces the urgent need for targeted, sustained support. For many, it's not a lack of skills or ambition - it's a lack of opportunity.

But we're determined to change that. By equipping young people with the skills, qualifications, and support they need to thrive, we're helping to create a level playing field where every young person has a fair chance to succeed.

Despite a challenging economic, political, and funding landscape, we've had the privilege of supporting almost 4,000 young people this year. Through positive role models, hands-on learning, and tailored programmes, they've seen real progress in their life skills, mental health, and education.

Looking ahead, collaboration is central to our approach. Our work alongside schools, businesses, and game-changing impact partners is key to delivering meaningful, life-changing experiences that respond to the real needs of young people.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the formal closure of the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme by government from April 2025. While we're naturally disappointed to see it end, we're incredibly proud of the transformational impact NCS has had over the past five years. It played a significant role in our organisation's journey - and, more importantly, supported thousands of young people through residential experiences, social mixing, community action, and vital skills development.

Thank you to everyone who has engaged, supported, and partnered with us over the last year.



Tom Clarke-Forrest
Founder & CEO



Mike Gahir
Chair of Trustees and Directors

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

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



Sport 4 Life's support made all the difference. My mentor Lincoln worked with me one-on-one, identifying my strengths and weaknesses.

Nadheer



WHY WE EXIST

More young people are being left behind by the system
- out of work, out of education, and out of options.

Since 2021, the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) has risen by 300,000 - a staggering 50% increase. Youth unemployment remains persistently high, at 2.5 times the national average, and a growing number of young people are economically inactive, with no clear route back into opportunity.

Around one in four unemployed young people who are NEET have been searching for work for over a year. One in five of this group has no formal qualifications at all.

The barriers they face are more complex than ever.

Over half of economic inactivity in the past three years is due to ill health - particularly mental health.

Today, more than 100,000 young people are out of work and not even looking for a job because of a mental health condition. That number has surged by 20% in just three years.

These trends are not just numbers - they reflect lives put on hold. Without timely, targeted support, these young people risk being shut out of meaningful work, personal development, and the chance to thrive.

That's why we exist.

As young people transition out of education, many face the very real risk of becoming long-term NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training)

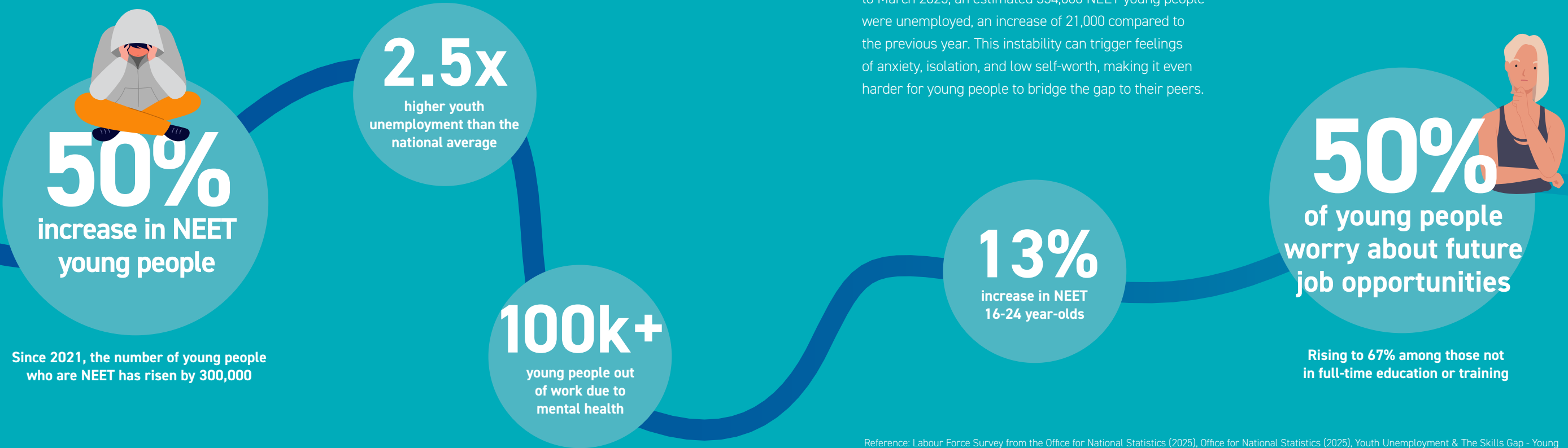
Sport 4 Life's UK-wide annual survey, alongside official data, highlights that from January to March 2025, approximately 923,000 young people aged 16-24 were NEET, representing 12.5% of this age group. Although this is a slight decrease from the previous year, the number remains alarmingly high.

During this transition, young people are also more vulnerable to developing mental health challenges. Around 19% of NEET young people report having a mental health condition - a figure significantly higher than their peers in education or employment. This can severely impact their confidence and ability to engage with job searching, employment, and further education.

Unemployment remains a major barrier. From January to March 2025, an estimated 354,000 NEET young people were unemployed, an increase of 21,000 compared to the previous year. This instability can trigger feelings of anxiety, isolation, and low self-worth, making it even harder for young people to bridge the gap to their peers.

These challenges are often worse for those from under-resourced backgrounds or with additional health needs. The high number of young people facing prolonged periods out of work or education raises the risk of wage scarring, welfare dependence, and ongoing mental health struggles - all of which undermine their overall wellbeing and future prospects.

Sport 4 Life's annual survey highlights that 50% of young people worry about future job opportunities, rising to 67% among those not in full-time education or training. The cost-of-living crisis adds to their concerns, with 84% worried about its impact and 55% anxious about future living opportunities. These challenges affect young people's confidence and wellbeing as they navigate education, training, and employment.



Reference: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics (2025), Office for National Statistics (2025), Youth Unemployment & The Skills Gap - Young Enterprise, Youth Foundation (2025), Explore Education Statistics. (2024)

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.

3,700+ hours of sport, training and mentoring



THEORY OF CHANGE



OUR IMPACT

Life Skills & Personal Development

1,424

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

Employability

1,993

improved their employability skills

Mental Health & Wellbeing

66%

reported an improvement in their wellbeing*

Education & Qualifications

289

experienced a positive impact and successfully completed a qualification

Crime & Anti Social Behaviour

1,097

exhibited positive changes in behaviours associated with crime

*Based on young people who completed a Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)

OUR IMPACT



3,875

young people supported



3,700+

hours of sport, training and mentoring support delivered

301 

young people progressed into employment, education or training
(of NEET cohorts)



43%

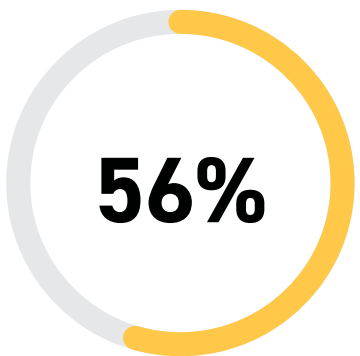
of young people significantly improved their key life skills

Demographics

57% Male

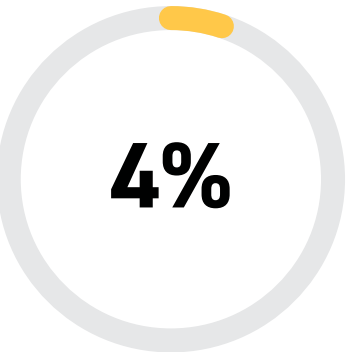
43% Female

<1% Undisclosed, trans

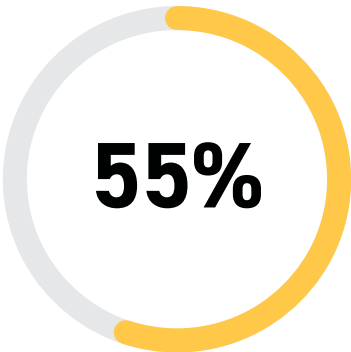


of young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds

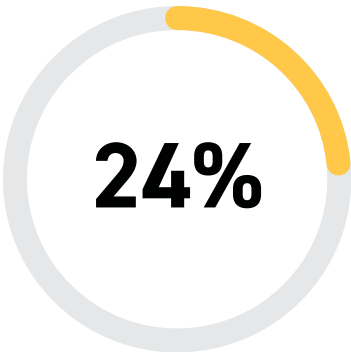
Disability/SEN



of engaged young people identified as having a disability



of young people with Learning disabilities



of young people affected by mental health disabilities

8% Health condition

5% Physical impairment

3% Hearing impaired

3% Multiple diagnosis

Engagement

2,117 young people have been meaningfully supported

524 NEET

1,593 EET

1,067 received 1-to-1 mentoring support

752 NEET

315 EET

231 attended employability activities

231 NEET

801 attended sport

299 NEET

502 EET



Progression

289 gained an accredited qualification / completed accredited training

104 Sector Based Qualifications

145 L1 Sports Leaders

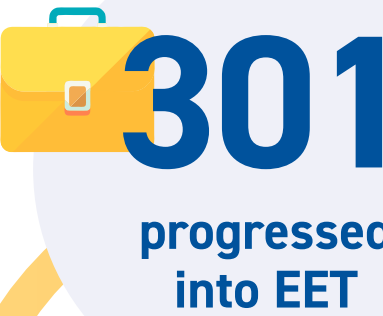
30 L1 Functional Skills

10 L2 Functional Skills

324 are still enrolled in mentoring services

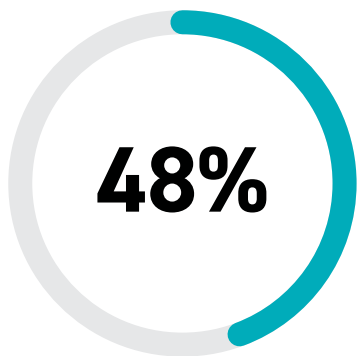
263 NEET

61 EET



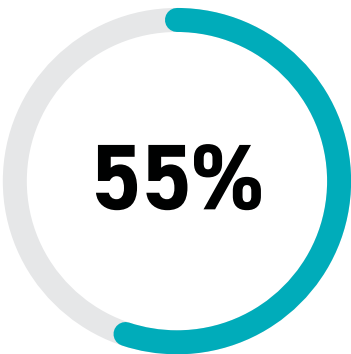
NEET: Not in Education, Employment, or Training | EET: (In) Education, Employment, or Training | NCS: National Citizens Service

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING



of young people reported improved coping skills and resilience when facing challenges (via pre/post Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS). scores).

improved their ability to make decisions independently. Parents have also observed meaningful change in their children's confidence and wellbeing, as seen in the testimony below.



Our son has attended some of the Sport 4 Life sessions and has thoroughly enjoyed them. He has grown in confidence and skill with his activities and has found the opportunity to socialise with other children invaluable. We could not be more grateful for the opportunities that he has received.

Deepak (parent)



These economic and technological pressures are directly impacting young people's mental health and wellbeing, leading to increased anxiety, lower motivation, and a decline in confidence when it comes to job searching, sustaining employment, or progressing in education.

76% have been affected by rising food prices

50% are worried about future job prospects

54% believe AI will reduce job opportunities



READ MORE

Voice of Young People 2025 survey results

CRIME & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR



- Including:
- Reduction in negative conduct
 - Improved decision-making and conflict resolution

Outcomes were assessed through self-reporting by the young people using our Crime Reduction Survey. These changes play a key role in strengthening protective factors that reduce the risk of youth offending and exclusion, particularly among NEET young people.

Action & Crime Prevention at Sport 4 Life UK

Since its early days, Sport 4 Life has intentionally used sport as a positive intervention to divert young people away from anti-social behaviour and crime. By providing regular, structured sports activities in deprived neighbourhoods across Birmingham and the West Midlands, the organisation offers safe spaces, positive role models, and opportunities that build confidence, discipline, and pro-social behaviour.

"My son found the opportunity to engage in activities during the holiday and to build a rapport with other children and leaders who were such positive role models. Thank you so very much."

As part of its continued commitment to crime reduction and supporting young people at risk, Sport 4 Life UK delivers targeted provision funded by the Triangle Trust.

This initiative engages young people who have criminal records or are at risk of offending, supporting them through integrated workshops and the delivery of accredited qualifications. Over the two-year period, 50 young people have been reached through this provision, which also includes NEET-specific sessions delivered in partnership with Pat Benson Community Sports Foundation.

In addition, Sport 4 Life delivered a Summer Jobs Programme in 2024, aimed at young people identified as being at risk of involvement in crime. Funded by UK Youth, this project supported 40 young people through pre-employment training, with 38 successfully completing five-week paid work placements, offering vital early work experience and positive alternatives during the summer break.

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

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

243

pupils across 26 schools engaged



5 employability workshops to 490 pupils



41 young people gained a Sports Leadership qualification



14 NCS Away from Home programmes



2,467

NCS Community experiences delivered



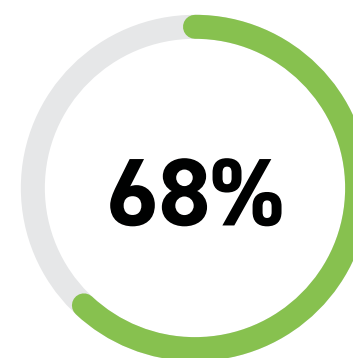
The mentoring support you have provided has been invaluable and has made a significant difference for our pupils in securing the right post-16 placements. It has benefited them in various ways - some pupils hadn't yet secured a college place, while others had an idea of what they wanted to pursue but were unsure how to take the next steps. Dan's mentoring was particularly impactful. He supported pupils by helping them apply for open days and courses they were interested in. The feedback from the pupils was overwhelmingly positive; they found Dan's guidance extremely helpful. He also took the time to follow up with individual pupils and check in on their progress. Dan built excellent rapport with the pupils, creating a trusting environment where they felt comfortable discussing any barriers they faced during school and exploring ways to overcome these challenges as they transition post-16.

St John Wall Catholic School



AWARD-WINNING EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Schools have reported back that out of the 112 pupils that received mentoring support and completed surveys, 40% 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

37% of students improved attainment

47% of students improved attendance

71% of students improved their behaviour and engagement in lessons

40% of students improved at least one of the above

Sport 4 Life gave me valuable real-world work experience to add to my CV, along with transferable skills that supported me in securing a job in the security sector.

Shuhanur



Sport 4 Life UK was proud to work in partnership with Titan Partnership to deliver mentoring and employability support in schools across Birmingham. Through this collaboration, young people were supported to build confidence, develop key life skills, and prepare for the world of work through tailored one-to-one support and engaging group sessions. The partnership helped ensure students had access to meaningful opportunities that supported both their personal development and future career pathways.

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.



Impact Partner Outcomes (enabled by Sport 4 Life UK)

Through this enabling model, we support our partners to improve their key performance metrics by at least 10%. We're proud to share that over the past year, our collaborative efforts led to an average increase of 155%.

No. of young people engaged	No. of sport sessions delivered
Total: 20,858	Total: 9,919
No. of development sessions (non-sport) delivered	No. of qualifications gained
Total: 4,759	Total: 156
No. of young people that transformed key life skills	No. of young people that improved mental health & wellbeing
Total: 13,284	Total: 13,202
No. of young people that improved employability skills	No. of young people progressing NEET to EET (employment, education, training)
Total: 2,618	Total: 1,077
No. of young people reducing likelihood of involvement in crime	
Total: 11,436	

THANK YOU

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

Through strategic partnerships, we work collaboratively with purpose-driven organisations to empower disadvantaged young people. By combining time, resources, and expertise, we create meaningful opportunities that build confidence, develop key skills, and prepare young people for lasting employment and brighter futures.



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



Now more than ever, supporting young people in our communities is vital. At G4S Events, we're proud to partner with Sport 4 Life to help create meaningful opportunities. The candidates truly impressed us during the interview process, and we're excited to support their growth as they take the next step in their careers.

Gillian Kershaw, Recruitment Business Partner
(G4S Events & Total Security Services)



SPORT 4 LIFE DOESN'T
JUST CHANGE LIVES;
IT SAVES LIVES.

Kit



CHANGING LIVES

Kit's story – Age 27

Kit faced a tough start in life, navigating undiagnosed autism and ADHD, disrupted education, and personal loss - all of which made it hard to find stability. Things hit a low point after leaving university and moving into supported accommodation. That's when they were introduced to Sport 4 Life UK.

With the support of a dedicated mentor and staff, Kit began rebuilding their confidence. They joined mentoring sessions, employability workshops, and social sport activities - all delivered in a safe, respectful environment that felt pressure-free and personal.

Kit worked closely with their mentor on CV writing, qualifications, and interview prep, while also gaining

skills through martial arts and fencing sessions that helped improve their wellbeing. Over time, they developed greater confidence, communication skills, and self-belief.

Inspired to give back, Kit became Chair of Sport 4 Life's Youth Voice Committee - advocating for others and using their experience to shape change. Today, Kit feels more hopeful, more confident, and is considering part-time work for the first time in years.

"You're hearing this from me - Sport 4 Life is so much more than a poster or flyer. It's worth a shot for anyone who wants more out of life. You don't need to like sports or even know what you want; you just need to want something more."



WATCH OUR MAKE
A CHANGE VIDEO

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 (2025-2026), we will;

- Continue to grow our Impact Partner model and enable more young people nationally
- Continue our progress and development in EDI
- Improve our careers support for schools
- Improve quality assurance process across all services
- Develop our support package for young people 'in work' and 'underemployed'
- Build on our Investors In People accreditation and continue to make work better for our people
- Grow our free reserves level to support financial sustainability





I've gained so many opportunities through Sport 4 Life. They've helped build my confidence, making me more resilient and less reliant on external validation. I know I'm good enough and capable.

Mia



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