



OUR STRATEGY FOR CHANGING THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

2022-2027

Registered Charity 1115222
Registered Company 05664605



OUR VISION

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

OUR MISSION

Delivering sports-themed personal development services to support young people's journey through education and employment.

OUR VALUES

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

This is our North Star and guides everything that we do.

We are a TEAM

We are a conscientious, approachable and trusting group with a common goal. We do our roles effectively, share in the success, and take responsibility in the failures.

QUALITY runs through the core of the organisation

We aim to be a beacon of good practice in all we do. We are data led and evidence based, dependable for all those we support and work with. Most importantly – we do what we say we do.

We do not stand still – we are a PROGRESSIVE organisation

We are a group with a growth mindset, leaving our egos at the door. We are curious, take feedback constructively, have a continuous approach to learning and embrace change.



FOREWORD

By Tom Clarke-Forrest, Founder & CEO

My passion for sport, young people and social change is very personal and very real. And so I'm incredibly proud to present Sport 4 Life UK's 5-year strategy, as we continue to work towards our mission and vision. I make no apologies for our scope and scale, nor our ambitions for the short-term and long-term in delivering real and lasting change.

The inequality gap continues to rise across many aspects of life. Young people continue to face a disrupted labour market, a volatile economic climate and significant mental health challenges. But despite these challenges, we continue to believe in young people. We believe they intrinsically have the passion and motivation to create a better future for themselves – and just need a helping hand on their journey. Using sport and physical activity as the vehicle, and through the key activities of mentoring and qualifications as part of our award-winning delivery model – we know we can be this helping hand.

This new strategy is the most co-produced in our history. I want to thank the many stakeholder groups who directly fed into its priorities and themes – including staff, volunteers, funders, commissioners, partners and most importantly – young people.

Over the next 5 years, we will continue to expand our services – growing financially and geographically to significantly increase the number of young people we support. This will be achieved through a new structured schools offer, new support for 'in-work' and 'underemployed' cohorts, an innovative new delivery partnership model, and continued transformational improvements in our delivery model. Sport 4 Life UK will continue to diversify its income streams, increasing its ability to deliver on key contracts and through providing agile and collaborative solutions to a range of partners.

As a people-focused organisation, we will honour our commitments in equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as workforce wellbeing, explore the best post-pandemic way of working and ensure incremental investment in our staff's learning and development. And as a socially responsible organisation, we will also make key contributions to our society and community – including commitments in Levelling Up and sustainability. Through the whole strategy, we will be truly data-led – following key insights and evidence, as well as youth-led – being guided through our exciting new 'Youth Voice' approach.

Whilst we are incredibly proud of the many things we have achieved since our inception 18 years ago – and grateful to all those who have played a part in our journey – we are not finished. There is more to do, and we are unwavering in our desire, sense of responsibility and purpose to achieve these strategic priorities – and as the leading sport for employment charity in the West Midlands, we are well positioned – strategically and operationally – to do this.

Our values are in the DNA of Sport 4 Life UK, and it's through this lens that we will continue our ongoing journey of development, learning and growth – in providing life-changing opportunities and impact for those young people who need it most.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Tom Clarke-Forrest'.

Tom Clarke-Forrest



WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY

Our strategy responds to changes both internally at Sport 4 Life UK, in society and the sector more generally.

There have been some positive signs of recovery after a tough few years for the employment market, however the cost of living crisis, continued disparity between the most disadvantaged and their peers and a competitive job market is affecting young people. We are determined to be part of the solution.

THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN GROWING UP IN POVERTY IS RISING, WITH OVER 4.3 MILLION CHILDREN ACROSS THE UK LIVING IN POVERTY.

IN BIRMINGHAM ALONE, 51% OF CHILDREN UNDER 16 RESIDE IN THE 10% 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.

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.

THERE IS ALSO A SIGNIFICANT OVERLAP BETWEEN NEET STATUS AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES, WITH 25% OF NEET YOUNG.



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)

PARTNERSHIPS

We are always seeking partnerships with inspirational individuals and game-changing organisations who want to build a better community and change the lives of disadvantaged young people. Invest your time, resource and expertise in our cause, and together we can enable young people to lead fulfilling, rewarding lives.

Working in partnership with organisations and individuals is essential to achieving our mission. These strategic partnerships make a real difference in improving the lives of young people. Strategic partnerships are a brilliant way we can work together to change the lives of young people, develop your own internal staff and promote your organisation's social and societal impact.

It is important to us that our partnerships are mutually beneficial and values led, this is one of the reasons we have such deep and warm relationships with our existing corporate partners.



COMMON GOAL



TOUCHWOOD



“ONE OF THE THINGS WE REALLY LOVE ABOUT SPORT 4 LIFE UK IS THE WAY THE CHARITY USES NON-TRADITIONAL METHODS TO ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE SO THAT THEIR WORK WILL BE EMBEDDED INTO THAT PERSON'S LIFE FOREVER.”

Sophie Warren

Birmingham Trainee Solicitor's Society

OUR KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2022-2027

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;

- Embed our career support for schools
- Develop our support for young people 'in-work' and 'underemployed'
- Support more than 5,000 young people a year
- Grow our revenue to £4m
- Grow regionally (and nationally) through partnerships

To drive through transformational improvements in our services;

- Being truly data-led
- Be awarded a Quality Assurance kitemark to ensure quality standards and continually improved curriculum
- Technological advancement in systems, digital and infrastructure

To be the 'go to' youth employment charity for the region;

- Be distinctive leaders in our sector and beacons of good practice

- Be able to deliver on key contracts as sub-primes and lead consortiums
- Continue to be a thought leader
- Realise the further potential benefits from collaborative working

To be one of the best places to work in the West Midlands;

- Be a truly inclusive workforce
- Prioritise wellbeing
- Explore ultra-flexible ways of working
- Have a relentless focus on our values, and our learning & development

To make key contributions to our society and community;

- Progress towards net zero
- Lobby, influence and deliver on 'Levelling Up'
- Contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals



THIS YEAR'S PRIORITIES 2026/27

To work towards our five year priorities, this year (2026-2027) we will;

- Grow our reach and impact, supporting more young people through the expansion of our programmes and partnerships
- Launch and develop new services for schools, helping more young people overcome barriers and achieve positive outcomes
- Strengthen our strategic partnerships, working with businesses, funders and communities to create lasting change
- Amplify the voices and stories of young people, ensuring lived experience shapes our services and influences wider systems
- Continue to innovate and improve, enhancing the quality, consistency and impact of all our programmes
- Invest in our people and culture, supporting our ambition to be one of the best places to work in the West Midlands
- Raise our profile and influence, building our reputation as the leading youth employability charity in the region
- Strengthen our financial sustainability, creating the foundations to support even more young people in the years ahead

This year we aim to reach the following targets;

PROGRESSION

123

IMPROVED EDUCATION PERFORMANCE

1,192

CRIME REDUCTION RELATED OUTCOME

340

GAINED A QUALIFICATION

281

PROGRESSED INTO EDUCATION OR TRAINING

185

ACHIEVED A SUSTAINED JOB OUTCOME

ENGAGEMENT

1,475

SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED THEIR LIFE SKILLS

1,052

SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

1,475

IMPROVED THEIR MENTAL HEALTH/WELLBEING



SCAN TO WATCH OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY FILM.



ALL THAT WE DO IS FOCUSED ON CHANGING THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Supporting the future generation has never been so important. If young people continue to engage with education, gain new skills, and stay physically and mentally healthy, it will increase their chances of progressing through life successfully.

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Sport4LifeUK



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