

# BALL GAMES ALLOWED

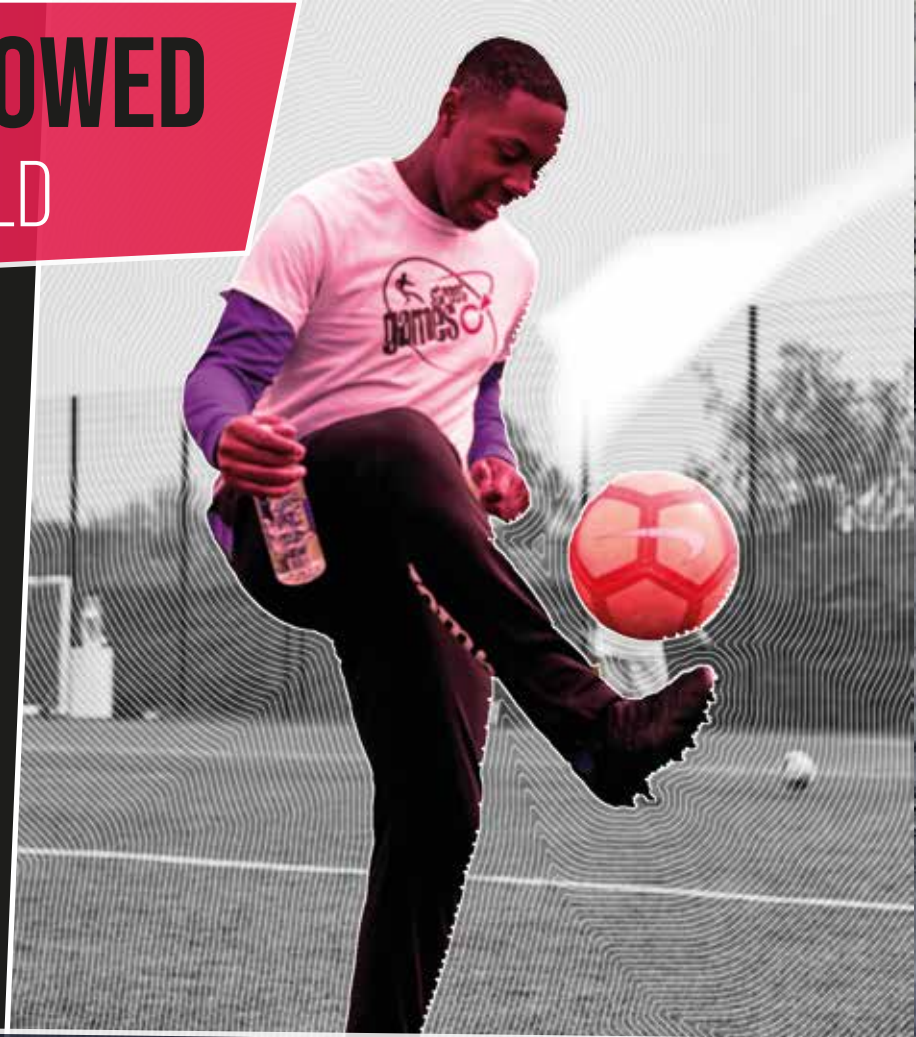
## FORGE VALLEY, SHEFFIELD

### BALL GAMES ALLOWED

'Ball Games Allowed' is a StreetGames initiative which aims to support young people to play football in their local community.

### FORGE VALLEY, SHEFFIELD

Forge Youth is a community organisation working in the Shy Green area of Sheffield. Their main purpose is to build relations with young people using football as the 'hook' together with additional support around physical, mental and social well-being. Each programme is needs-led, with young people helping to shape their activities.



### WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE?

The 'Ball Games Allowed' investment has allowed Forge Youth to set up and deliver sessions all year round, especially in the winter, when typically it is harder to find a place which has floodlights at an affordable price. For Forge Youth, this is a crucial time of the year, as it can become difficult for youths to get out and unwind. It is therefore important to provide a safe place that young people can come and stay connected.

The 'Ball Games Allowed' sessions started in January 2020 but had to be 'paused' in March due to the Coronavirus Pandemic and Lockdown restrictions. Activities re-started in September, with sessions proving popular, with an average 25 people attending each week.

In order to accommodate different age groups, sessions have now been split to accommodate under 18s in one group and over 18s in another.

In addition, coaches have started to identify young leaders from the sessions and have been supporting them, so that some are now taking on the role of assistant and helping to set up sessions themselves.

*“ Pitch hire can be expensive and spaces to play are limited, particularly in the darker nights. This vital support has given young people in the community a safe place to play football who might have not had the opportunity otherwise. We have been able to engage with more young people, grow our project and give opportunity to raise young leaders. The support we have been given through Ball Games Allowed and StreetGames has been excellent. ”*

**Chris Niall, Forge Youth**

*“ The session gives me a place to relieve the pressure I feel from school or home. ”*

**Participant**

*“ It gives me something positive to do in my week ”*

**Participant**

In total over 60 young people have been engaged via this programme, with an average weekly attendance of 25. Whilst lockdown has been hard, this shows the need for sessions like this to continue.

## IMPACT BEYOND NUMBERS.

The Coronavirus Pandemic has been challenging for many young people. Many have not been as active as normal and some have found it hard to talk about their experiences and how it might have affected them. Some of the older young people are finding it hard to find jobs and it is affecting them as they don't know what to do. The jump from education to employment has been tough.

This programme has allowed Forge Youth to connect and support young people during a difficult time, giving them some structure, keeping them from going down 'the wrong path', helping build skills, confidence and give them opportunities to volunteer.

A couple of the young people have 'stepped up' and are willing to help. They have also opened up and started conversations about life and what's tough. Having role models like this, who show vulnerability has been important, especially when the young people they work with, especially men often try to remain tough.



## WHAT NEXT?

Forge Youth would like to continue the programme. For the older participants they would like to build more around consistency and leadership and give them responsibility to run the sessions themselves and provide them with a space to play.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic it has not been possible to provide the Football Activator workshop yet. However, they would like to run this course around Easter time and then give young people the opportunity to deliver a community festival / tournament in the summer.

They also hope to develop more links with schools (when safe to do so). In the meantime, they are looking at creating videos which the school can play and then direct young people to their sessions.

It does take time to build relationships and this is why it's important for programmes like this to continue as these things can't be achieved through short term projects.

