

REACH UP YOUTH NEXTGEN



'Next Gen' is an initiative designed to upskill and empower young people to become the next generation of young leaders and role models within their local communities. Through this process, young people have been creating their own volunteering journeys, opening up career pathways and inspiring others to do the same.

NextGen projects generally include the following elements:

- Recruitment: Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs) within the StreetGames network recruit young people from the local area to take part in the programme
- Induction: The young people are introduced to StreetGames, the 'NextGen' concept and informally discuss training needs
- Training: The young people access courses via the StreetGames Training Academy to help them develop as young leaders and volunteers, diversifying their delivery options and challenging them as individuals to support their peers and community. These courses are chosen by the young people, based on the informal training needs analysis
- Local Delivery: The young people volunteer regularly at LTO sessions, putting into practice the leadership skills and knowledge gained in real life situations. They are encouraged to share these experiences with each other and reflect on any challenges they may have come across
- Social Action & Youth Voice: Young people plan and deliver a social action project in their area which may involve planning a mini project that offers new activity, or tackles a social issue
- Celebration Event: An event for the young people and their families, where they receive certificates for their contributions to their community

The NextGen project in Burngreave, Sheffield was led by Reach up Youth. Reach up Youth is a charity that aims to increase community cohesion within the local area. The organisation delivers educational and recreational activities, with the aim of supporting local young people to reach their full potential. Reach up Youth utilised £15,920 of funding from Voluntary Action Sheffield to deliver their NextGen project, from March to October 2022.

During the project Reach up Youth worked with 15 young males, who developed their skillsets through:

- Delivering Reach up Youths sport/workshop sessions
- Organising and delivering events
- Attending Training workshops via the StreetGames Training Academy
- Taking part in a 'Dragons Den' style, workshop and pitched ideas for what they felt was needed in their community

The group were all local young people already known to Reach up Youth, and most had engaged with them for a number of years. The young people were all already involved in volunteering, and the NextGen project aimed to further develop their leadership, workforce skills and confidence.

Recruitment of the young volunteers began in March 2022, and a session took place to introduce the programme, expectations and a training needs analysis was undertaken. The young people commenced training with StreetGames in April, and have been delivering volunteering locally since May, on Wednesday evenings. The Wednesday evening delivery, has varied from sport sessions, to debates and workshops in which the volunteers would lead discussions around topical issues such as crime, mental health and areas of the school curriculum.



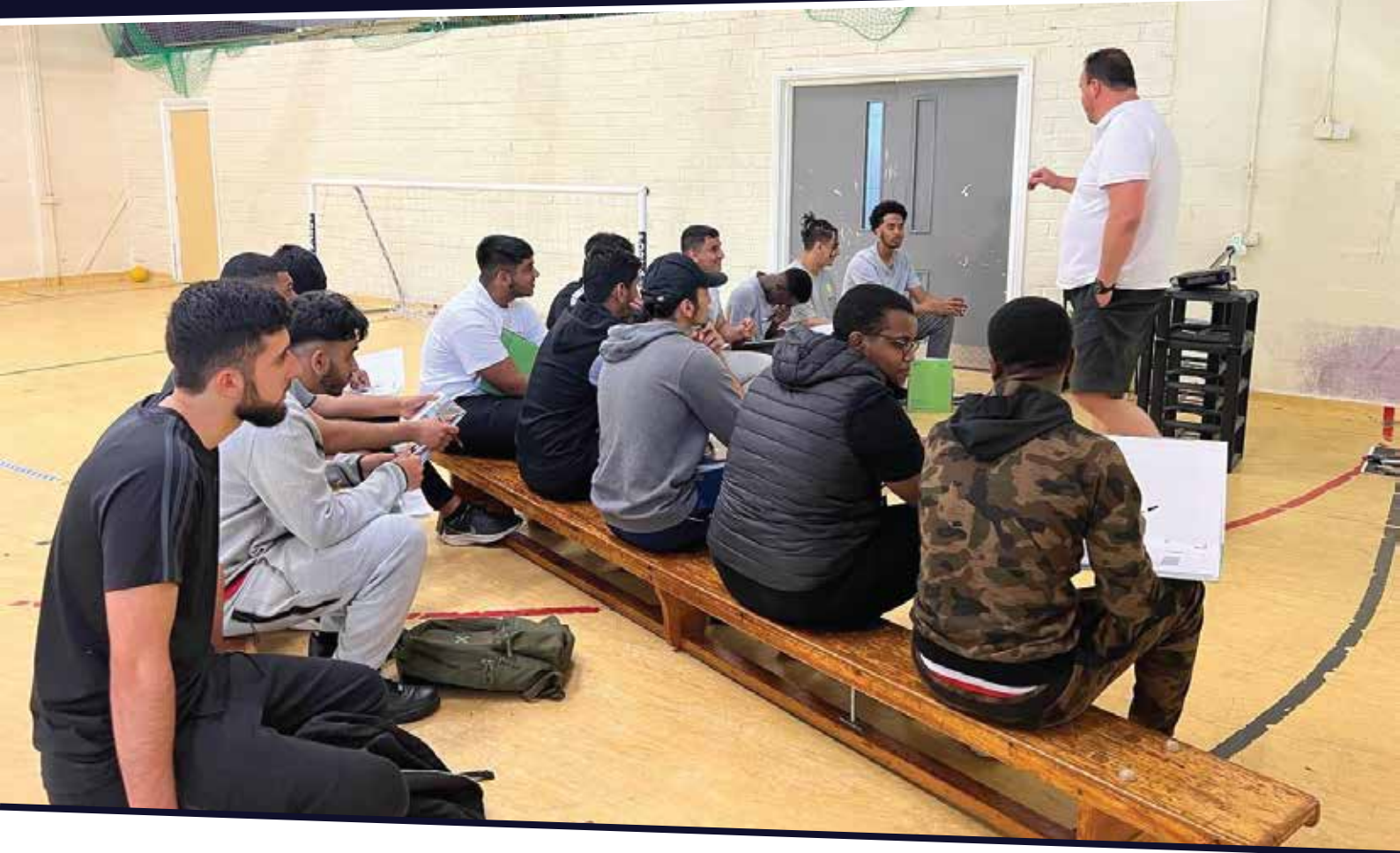
750

volunteering hours have been delivered locally by the young people since May



50

hours of volunteering, on average, completed per young person



TRAINING

Below shows the range of training courses provided:

Safeguarding

6

Learners

Multi Skills

7

Learners

First Aid

16

Learners

Managing & Organising Events

9

Learners

Level 2 Multi Skills

7

Learners

The young people and project staff at Reach up Youth, were complimentary of the delivery of the training workshops and commented on how they enjoyed the relaxed and interactive style:

"The boys enjoyed the safeguarding course; they were encouraged to share their views and opinions on certain issues and debate.... they thought it was great that they were getting a qualification in this way"

Safiya (Project Lead)

"Really interesting, it was a good balance of practical and theory"

Young Volunteer

Safiya, the project lead at Reach up Youth also delivered and designed her own training workshops. Workshop topics were based on what she felt were important areas to explore for the young people she was working with. The workshops primarily focused on developing the young volunteer's employability skills, and explored topics such as interview skills, body language and reducing anxiety in stressful situations.

DRAGONS DEN EVENT

As a part of this programme, all volunteers participated in a 'Dragon's Den' style event. Each group developed ideas based on what they felt, their peers and the community needed.

The ideas included:

- Pitch 1: The idea was to set up a community multi-sports tournament in the local park, with the aim of engaging families in the local community. The event would be free of charge and would be supported by the local mosque who would provide volunteers. There would be food stands there on the day which would be sold at a price in order to generate funds to cover event cost. Any profits would go to the local mosques as a charitable donation. There would also be board games for those who did not want to participate in sport
- Pitch 2: The idea was to run a tournament that uses traditional 'childhood games', such as tag. Teams would enter the tournament for free. It would be a day long and there would be prizes for winners. In order to generate atmosphere, there would be a commentator there too. If successful the idea would be to run these regularly
- Pitch 3: Similarly, to pitch one, the idea was to provide a multi-sport tournament offer to the local community. The group felt that there was a lack of opportunities within the local area to come together as a community, therefore the tournament would be run as a festival in order to build community cohesion

The young people pitched their ideas to a panel consisting of StreetGames and Voluntary Action Sheffield staff. All pitches were awarded the following funds to deliver their event:

- First Place – Pitch 1 £300 prize to deliver event
- Second Place – Pitch 3 £150 prize to deliver event
- Third Place – Pitch 2 £90 prize to deliver event

OUTCOMES

Below provides a summary of the outcomes achieved through the project. To determine this feedback was gathered through 1-2-1 interviews and focus group discussions with the young volunteers and project staff involved.

INCREASED CONFIDENCE

Feedback from the young volunteers highlighted that Reach Up Youth is a safe and welcoming environment, however, the project leads at the organisation are willing to place the young volunteers out of their comfort zone to allow them to develop personally. The young people had been involved in a broad range of opportunities that placed them in challenging situations, in order to grow their confidence, including; leading sport sessions, public speaking, delivering events, and even undertaking acting roles in a play that explored systemic racism.

The young volunteers commented on the importance of being placed outside of their comfort zone, and how it has significantly impacted their confidence:

"At the start I was really nervous and self-conscious when talking on stage. But when constantly taken out of that comfort zone, then the uncomfortable feeling becomes comfortable."

Young volunteer

The young people felt that the opportunity provided by Reach up Youth to develop their confidence was unique, and rare to find in their local area. They commented on the lack of youth provisions in the area, and the negative impact this can have on young people:

"In this area we're really deprived of youth groups, before Reach up Youth I had never heard of anything similar in the area, because of this a lot of kids in the area will just come home, go on their phones or games console."

Young volunteer

Many of the young people involved in the project had been volunteering for a number of years. Undertaking the courses, provided by StreetGames training academy has provided them with increased confidence in their role as a volunteer, particularly in regards to dealing with Safeguarding and First Aid issues that may arise:

"I feel confident that if I'm doing an event and something goes wrong, I'd know what to do."

Young volunteer

RAISED ASPIRATIONS

The project has played a role in developing the aspirations and ambitions of the young people involved, by providing them with qualifications that allowed them to apply for paid work and other opportunities, in order to utilise the skills, they have developed through years of volunteering.

However, the community at Reach up Youth seems to have played the biggest role in raising the ambitions and aspirations of the young people involved in the project - Abdussaber, a 17-year-old volunteer on the project highlights this. Abdussaber is currently undertaking his A-Levels, with the goal of studying Aero Space Engineering at University, and is exploring the potential of doing this in America. Abdussaber credits Reach up Youth for playing a huge role in developing him to believe in himself and be ambitious:

"I didn't really care about anything before I came here, but when I started coming here, I started seeing my brother as a role model.... I wanted to start being like my friends (at Reach up Youth), and be better at what I did, whether that was school, basketball, or an event, I just felt a lot more ambitious with everything"

Abdussaber, Young volunteer

SUPPORT, MENTORING AND CREATING ROLE MODELS

Safiya's impact on the young volunteers cannot be overstated. Throughout the project Safiya has provided her own training workshops, in which she brings together the young volunteers to discuss a broad range of issues. Within these workshops the young people are encouraged to be open and raise any challenges they are facing. The young volunteers felt that this space she has created is of huge value to them:

"Everybody needs the opportunity to talk about mental health, so being able to come here and open up is really beneficial."

Young volunteer

Safiya, has also communicated with StreetGames staff throughout the project, to increase her understanding of the qualifications the young volunteers have attained, so she knows how best to direct them when applying for jobs.

The young volunteers also commented on how older members of Reach up Youth had acted as a mentor to them. Sami, a 17-year-old volunteer at Reach up Youth, highlighted the positive impact this had on him. When Sami first started attending Reach up Youth, he lacked confidence and was struggling at school. Being the only male from his household, becoming involved in Reach up Youth introduced Sami to a number of positive male role models who became mentors. When Sami told them he was struggling with school, they encouraged him to bring his school work to the sessions, so they could provide extra support. Since then, Sami has passed his GCSEs with flying colours and is currently undertaking A-Level's with the plan of going to university. Now that Sami is a leader within Reach up Youth, he adopts the same approach as his mentors:

"The leaders here aren't just programmed to lead fun sessions and tell the kids to go home after, we're programmed to connect with at least one kid a day... I'll make sure I'm asking kids the right questions so we are aware if they're having any problems at home or in school."

Sami, Young volunteer

SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND LEADING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

The young volunteers felt they had an improved relationship with sport and physical activity as a result of their engagement. The group often used the facilities at the Verdon centre to play basketball or football together. This has developed a passion for sport amongst the volunteers and has created a number of positive sporting habits. Feedback from the young volunteers highlighted that their engagement in sport has had a number of positive effects on the rest of their life:

"I feel like being involved in sport has helped me a lot in my religion and education because of the discipline. Being a Muslim, you have to pray five times a day, it sounds easy, but it's really not. Sometimes you're in the middle of a game, and it can be really hard to put the controller down and go and do something you really need to do."

Young volunteer

"Playing basketball is my favourite thing to do, it gives me peace of mind."

Young volunteer

Having access to the Verdon centres facilities provides these young people with the rare opportunity to play sport in a free, safe and readily available environment.

MEETING OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE AND CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Throughout the project, the young volunteers involved engaged in a number of activities that allowed them to meet other young people from across the city, such as, 'Dark Nights', events at the English Institute of Sport and a celebration of Black History month at the Sheffield City Council Town Hall. Some of the StreetGames training courses also allowed the young people to mix with other NextGen volunteers from another local community organisation delivering a NextGen programme, Saalik Youth Project.

Many of the young people also attended StreetGames Inspiration 2022 awards. This event brought together young people from across the country who have made a significant contribution to their local community through sport. This gave young volunteers the opportunity to shine a light on some of the work they have been doing in their local community, as well as hearing about other projects that are being delivered throughout the country. At the event Sami, was awarded NextGen Volunteer of the Year. This award recognises volunteers that have put their all into personal development and is a recognition of Sami's commitment to developing his skills, willingness to go outside of his comfort zone and grow his confidence.



FUTURE PLANS

During the role out of Sheffield NextGen, two of the young volunteers involved in the project utilised their Level-2 Multi skills qualification to secure part time jobs as sport coaches in the English Institute of Sport. Others commented on how the qualifications are going to support their university applications:

"I want to go into being a paramedic, so this really boosted what I'm going to put into my personal statement for university."

Young volunteer

Whilst many of the young volunteers are at a busy point of their lives, having to dedicate large amounts of time to their A Levels, and university applications – all stated they will continue to dedicate as much time as possible to volunteering with Reach up Youth. Safiya, is also committed to continue her work with this cohort, as well as many other young people from the local community, with a focus on continued development.

PROJECT LEARNING

One key takeaway from this project is the importance of offering young volunteers expanded opportunities and the chance to obtain qualifications. The young people involved in the project already possessed a range of transferable skills acquired through their volunteering experiences with Reach up Youth but lacked the formal qualifications that would enable them to utilise these skills in paid employment. This emphasises that the barriers faced by young people in underserved communities tends to be due to a lack of opportunity rather than a lack of ability.

Through seeing the young volunteers gain paid employment, the LTO leaders gained a greater appreciation for the project and the potential it had to benefit not only their organisation, but also the young people they work with.

A final takeaway from the project, was the value of having a strong working relationship between all organisations involved. Throughout the project, Voluntary Action Sheffield worked closely with both StreetGames and Reach up Youth, which proved to be valuable for the project. They were able to utilise their connections within Sheffield to provide opportunities to link into other areas of their work and supported StreetGames in ensuring the project's progress.

