

# SAALIK YOUTH PROJECT NEXTGEN



## SAALIK YOUTH PROJECT

Saalik Youth Project is based in Fir Vale, Sheffield, with activities for young people delivered in and around Fir Vale Youth Centre. In recent years, the area has developed a poor reputation factored by acts of serious youth violence just yards from the centre, but project leader Imran is dedicated to ensuring young people in the community have a safe haven in Saalik Youth Project.

Inside the centre has pool, table tennis and football tables with a prayer room, kitchen and sofas for young people to relax and socialise. The walls are covered with generations of participants and volunteers, including the older relatives of current participants and also Imran, participating and leading various sports, trips and developmental activities, over the last 20 years as a youth and community worker.

Reflecting on these past experiences, Imran says:

*"I'm happy to say that the majority of our young volunteers have gone on to do really well for themselves, and I know that at the very least, all of them had a great time and have really fond memories from here"*

## THE COMMUNITY

Fir Vale is a densely populated deprived area, with a high proportion of residents being part of a close-knit Asian community. Imran is engrained in the community as a widely trusted adult, long time youth worker and mentor, which meant he was able to effectively engage and consult both parents and young people in the local area, to gauge which issues in particular needed to be addressed following the Covid pandemic and learn how he and Saalik could help. This included undertaking two surveys which both received a large number of responses and provided a great deal of insight, in terms of what support young people in the community may need from Saalik.

## RESEARCH

**Young People Survey: March 2021 (221 responses, age 10-25)**

**During Covid, young people's biggest worries/struggles were:**

- o Isolation/ lack of social interaction
- o Maintaining Physical Health
- o Schooling/Online Learning

**Once restrictions were over, young people were interested in:**

- o Trips and Retreats
- o Sport/Physical Activity
- o Social/Charity Projects - helping others locally and around the world
- o Developmental Sessions – such as Life Coaching, Mentoring, Reading Clubs and Creative Writing.

## Once restrictions were over, young people were interested in the following workshops:

- Personal Development – such as Business Skills, Finance, Time Management, CV Workshops, Character Building
- Health – Physical and Mental
- Understanding Social Media, Technology and Online Safety

## Parent Survey: March 2021 (86 responses)

Learning gained from the young people's survey was reinforced by the parent survey, showing that parents in the community had similar worries for their children following the pandemic, including:

- Poor Physical and Mental Health
- School/Lack of education
- Friendships/Lack of socialising
- Screen Time/Gaming

Parents were also asked to rate on a scale of 1-10, how confident they felt supporting their child(ren) with their learning at home.



The score above highlights the need for additional support for young people during their development.

## THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Post Covid, Imran set about developing the Saalik Youth Leadership Programme, aiming to address these issues. With the help of StreetGames' Yorkshire Fieldworker, Saalik was able to access £15,920 from Voluntary Action Sheffield to deliver the programme, with its aims and outcomes perfectly aligned to the StreetGames 'NextGen' initiative, which is designed to resource organisations to upskill and empower young people to become the next generation of young leaders and role models within their local communities.

Following the recruitment of 22 young volunteers to the programme, they too were consulted to sense-check that the issues highlighted in Saalik's research was relevant to them, and that the programme would meet their needs and would benefit them going forwards. Based on this, the following outcomes were developed:

The Youth Leadership Programme aims to:

- Increase the confidence of young people from low-income families
- Raise aspirations of the young people involved in the project
- Provide support and mentoring to young people who are uncertain about the direction they are wanting to take next
- Allow young people to meet other young people from across the city in a supportive and positive environment

To achieve this, the following modules were designed by Saalik to address the deficits identified as a consequence of Covid restrictions, and address the aspirations highlighted by the young volunteers in terms of their development.

Each of the following modules would comprise of a number of sessions, each of which generally consisted of:

- Leadership Sessions - 90 minute / 120-minute workshop
- Post-workshop physical activity/exercises, reading and reflection/journaling
- Networking
- Opportunities for trips and meals together

### Module 1 : Personal Direction and Development

- Setting a vision/purpose
- Goal setting
- Values, core principles and beliefs
- Personal development planning

### Module 2 : Creating & Maintaining a Healthy Lifestyle

- What is a healthy lifestyle?
- Lifestyle Wheels
- Food vs mood
- Diet Pillars
- Behaviour change-Nudge Theory
- Actions, commitment and self-discipline

### Module 3 : Managing your Psychological and Emotional States

- Breathing, relaxation and mindfulness
- Generating personal energy
- Creating self-confidence
- Self-care
- Diversionary activities
- Building resilience
- Maintaining perspective
- Managing emotions

### Module 4: Communicating with Impact

- Theory of high impact communication
- Status behaviour
- Public speaking
- Rapport building

### Module 5: Critical Thinking

- How the mind works
- Fact-based decision-making
- The risk of social media
- Unconscious bias
- Cognitive illusion (e.g. confirmation bias and affinity bias)
- Consensus building

### Module 6: Responsible Citizenship

- Your vision for the world
- Climate change
- Systems Thinking
- Responsibilities, commitments and actions

### Module 7: Leadership and Peer Support

- Leadership qualities
- Active listening
- Creating synergy
- Mentoring and peer coaching
- Group facilitation
- Conflict resolution
- Project Management
- Finance

### Module 8: Health and Safety Management

- Safeguarding
- First Aid
- Mental Health First Aid
- Risk assessment



Youth Leadership sessions began in March 2022, with all young people engaged throughout. All participants were aged between 15 and 23. In terms of headline data from the Youth Leadership Programme:



**22**

Young Leaders



**500+**

Attendances



**24**

Leadership Sessions



**15**

Football Sessions



**3**

Residentials / Trips

## TRAINING

Alongside fellow local community sports organisation 'Reach Up Youth', Saalik accessed a number of training courses through the StreetGames Training Academy. A total of £13,000 from Voluntary Action Sheffield contributed towards training costs which provided:

**First Aid**

**15**

Learners

**Multi Skills**

**18**

Learners

**Level 2  
Multi Skills**

**7**

Learners

**Safeguarding**

**19**

Learners

**Managing &  
Organising Events**

**17**

Learners

**Youth Mental  
Health First Aid**

**14**

Learners

Saalik generated a total of 105 attendances to valuable StreetGames-led workshops that taught the young people a variety of important life skills.

*"Since the mental health training I've learnt how to start difficult conversations"*

*"Safeguarding training has shown me how to look out for stuff outside the box in vulnerable children – I will put this into practice when I'm coaching."*





# HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

Alongside the planned modules, Imran set the group the task of reading the book 'How to Win Friends and Influence People', in stages throughout the programme – with regular check ins and group discussions to reflect on things they may have learnt. Impressively, towards the end of the programme around half of the group had really taken to a book primarily aimed at career professionals, and the young people spoke positively of it during a reflection session.

*"I love the book, it's made me think about how to deal with people in a way I've not thought about before and I like the way it just pops into your mind day-to-day, I've learnt that remembering someone's name is a huge thing."*

*"I had to stop myself reading so I didn't get too far ahead."*

When asked what they'd learnt so far from the book, others said:

*"How to be a good listener"*

*"How to make other people feel other important, like always addressing people by their name"*

*"How to see other people's point of view"*

Imran sums up the positive influence his programme aims to achieve by acknowledging during the reflection session...

*"...this book isn't intended for your age group, but if you take on board and apply these principles, you'll be successful within workplaces, relationships and everything. For those that have been reading, during the next week, try and apply one of the principles you've learnt!"*

## DRAGONS DEN

On 30th September 2022, to mark the end of the programme and celebrate the journey the young people had been on, Saalik organised their own 'Dragon's Den' event. The panel consisted of StreetGames staff and a fellow project leader from another local community organisation delivering their own NextGen programme, Reach Up Youth. Imran took a back seat during the event to gauge the progress the young volunteers had made, particularly in terms of confidence and collaboration through their public speaking, dedication to their tasks and general support of each other.

The young volunteers split into four groups, and presented their social action ideas to the panel in the way they would present to the real Dragons Den panel, introducing each other by name and addressing the panel formally.

### Group 1 - Summer BBQ

A 'Summer BBQ' Event open to the community, providing food and a number of activities inside and outside of the youth centre. Aiming to provide fun for all families, improve community cohesion and promote Saalik Youth Project, attracting new participants and volunteers.

### Group 2 - Community Festival

A Community 'Festival' comprised of activities and food stalls raising money for Assalam Foundation, a charity that works locally giving 100% of donations to the Pakistani Floods Appeal, a cause that is close to the hearts of the young people at Saalik and many others in the community.

### Group 3 - Basketball Tournament

A 'Basketball Tournament', inspired by local sportsperson Jamaal Williams, who currently plays for Manchester Giants and agreed to be involved in the project, after contact from the group. Aiming to raise participation and the aspirations of 15-18 year olds in the community, through a relatable, positive black male role model from Sheffield.

### Group 4 - Football Tournament

A 'Charity Football Tournament' complete with market stalls at the local AstroTurf facility. The event also hopes to raise money for the Assalam Foundation and attract young people and family members across the community to improve community spirit.


The panel then consulted on the pros and cons of each pitch and fed this back to the room. The panel declared Group three as the winning team, followed by Imran announcing that he would like everyone to collaborate and use the prize money together, on a project that incorporates all of the following strengths each group had shown during the event:


- **COLLABORATION** – All of the groups made a great team effort, introducing and supporting each other when needed, if they forgot lines or struggled with questions from the panel
- **RESEARCH** – Group 3 had justified the need for their project by researching local crime statistics – ‘the crime rate has gone up by 53% in the last 2 years for under 18’s in our area, which is why our target age is 15-18 to try and divert them from crime’
- **ASSET BASED** – All the groups had wisely thought about using the assets available to them in the community, making the most of a small budget. I.e. using Saalik volunteers to run events or gaining sponsorship from local traders and businesses
- **ROLE MODELS** – Group 3 in particular, understood the positive influence that role models like Imran can have and applied that to engaging young people in the community
- **COMMUNITY FOCUSED** – Many of the pitches were considerate of what the community needs from their project, taking the Cost of Living Crisis into account when setting entrance fees or food prices, and recruiting female volunteers to meet with young women who may want to attend the event but may not feel it is safe enough to walk there alone
- **RISK ASSESSMENTS** – Taking learning from their StreetGames workshops and Youth Leadership modules, many of the pitches contained content on health and safety and managing risks at events


## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Throughout the Youth Leadership Programme, most workshops were followed by football sessions at the local Goals facility to maintain and improve teamwork, physical activity levels and to instil lasting sporting habits. Via a participant survey, the young leaders were asked throughout the programme how physically active they were – the results showed that on:

 **4 days – (30 minutes or more) of physical activity was completed in an average week**

 **3 days – (60 minutes or more) of physical activity was completed in an average week**

 **2 days – ALL of their physical activity was completed at Saalik in an average week**

## INCREASING CONFIDENCE

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Via a participant survey, the majority of participants said they had tried something new for the first time, since the start of the leadership programme. In the main, these included:



New sport / physical activity

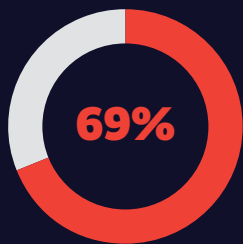


Delivering / leading sessions



Public speaking

Many of the young people highlighted that new experiences had helped them to build confidence and become more open to a wider range of opportunities. The Dragons Den event in particular, was shown to be a new, challenging experience for most. Following the event, Imran reflected to the panel how proud he was of the 'lads' teamwork and progression in terms of confidence and public speaking.



At the end of the Youth Leadership Programme, **69%** of the group said they only 'sometimes' feel out of their comfort zone, via a participant survey (as opposed to Often/All the time).

Within reflection sessions, group conversations regularly consist of pertinent, 'real life' topics that as one young leader explains, a male young person of Islamic faith may not always feel comfortable talking about openly at school, including subjects such as religion, discrimination and topical issues such as 'cancel culture'. Saalik has created a much loved, safe environment that allows young people to feel confident in their beliefs, allow themselves to step out of their comfort zones and express themselves without fear of judgement.

*[We come to Saalik because...] "we're comfortable, we don't have to think about things like the prayer room and Halal food. I think it helps that Imran is also Pakistani and religious, we get a level of comfort. Especially with praying, we don't get asked where we're going, how long we need. We're comfortable saying how we feel, whereas at school sometimes you find yourself over thinking and it's hard to express your own views."*

## RAISING ASPIRATIONS

Via a participant survey, the following percentage amount of young people who took part in the programme Agreed, or Strongly Agreed with the following statements:



**80%**  
I can achieve most of the goals I set myself



**80%**  
I can usually solve my own problems

The planned content throughout the Youth Leadership programme was designed to help broaden the young people's perspectives of the opportunities available and their own capabilities of achieving them. In particular, Imran reflected during the Dragon's Den event how impressed he was that the young people were not just going through the motions, but believed in and were clearly aspiring to make their projects a reality, through contacting local businesses and celebrities and putting lots of time and effort into designing posters and conducting their own research.

## MENTORING/SUPPORTING THE DIRECTION THEY ARE WANTING TO TAKE NEXT

Via a participant survey, the young people shared throughout that due to the Youth Leadership Programme, they had discovered new opportunities and thought about different options for the future, that they hadn't thought of before. In addition, other young people mention new interests in exploring careers in coaching and youth working.

*"After the Youth Leadership Programme, I now have a range of job opportunities and qualifications available"*

*"The 1-year and 3-year plans that we made we really thought provoking"*

*"I'd like to coach football and help others improve in their ability"*

*"Being a leader is something I'm now interested in"*

*"I've thought about joining more extra and super curriculum clubs"*

During a reflection session halfway through the programme, aside from the programme content, it is clear that Imran is attempting to instil important life skills and experience within the participants, that would put them in good stead for career opportunities and further education. He puts trust in the young people by giving them a degree of ownership with the programme, talking transparently about their budget, asking them how they would like to manage the activities, trips, and food options available and challenging them to make executive decisions for the benefit of the group.

When speaking about their Reflection sessions, participants stated that they appreciate being able to talk about 'real stuff' that is important, but doesn't get covered enough, if at all, at their schools despite some of the topics they recognise being vital to adult life.

When asked: 'what do you hope to do next?' after the Youth leadership programme ends, replies mainly consisted of:

#### **VOLUNTEERING**

#### **INVOLVEMENT IN ANOTHER PROGRAMME/COURSE**

#### **UNIVERSITY**

#### **COACHING**

*"[I want to] continue to build on the connections I have made and attend future programmes"*

*"Applying everything I've learnt through the course and the book into interviews, to make people want to hire me"*

*"After the Youth Leadership Programme ends I'm going to put it all on my CV, and hopefully gain some volunteering opportunities"*

*"[I want to] carry on meeting up to discuss challenges and new tasks and goals"*

The young leaders also had the opportunity to attend a careers event, engaging professionals from all different backgrounds including engineers, pharmacists, physios, business owners and local councillors (around 30 different professions, in total). The young people showed great leadership qualities in helping to set this up, encouraging many young people from the area to attend and open their mind to new people and potential pathways.

## **SUPPORTING POSITIVE NEW INTERACTIONS IN NEW ENVIRONMENTS**

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Throughout the Youth Leadership programme, the young people were treated to opportunities to venture out of their local community and gain experiences of new people, environments and activities. These mainly included:

- Trips and 'larger' activities such as paintballing, zorbing, and mini golf
- Teaming up with another local community sports organisation, Reach Up Youth – to create a larger cohort to attend StreetGames Training Workshops
- Opportunities to eat out together as a group, socialising as adults
- Consulting externally with new people and business owners, for Dragons Den projects

The young people also engaged with other partners such as Levelling the Playing Field, StreetGames, VAS Sheffield (funders of the Youth Leadership Programme), Foundry Climbing Centre, Lindley Trust and helping Sheffield City Council to run sports camps.

Fourteen young leaders also benefited from a 5-day residential, consisting of workshops, self-catering, personal development and social elements, which served as a new, developmental experience as well as a celebration and well deserved 'getaway'.







## **NEXT STEPS**

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Following the Saalik Youth Leadership programme, 22 young people remain fully engaged and integrated into a close-knit group of peers with increased confidence, raised aspirations and a wider, positive outlook on the opportunities available to them in the future. Participants now have greater, positive ideas about the steps they would like to take next in the context of either sports, volunteering, coaching and education.

Saalik ensured throughout the programme that participants would be able to evidence the journey and progress they had made, using:

- Certificates – from StreetGames training courses and workshops
- Lifestyle Wheels – these were used as a tool to gauge at different points in time, where they felt they were on a numbered scale of different aspects of their lifestyles. These were completed confidentially and are personal to each young leader
- Workshop content was shared with the young leaders to refer back to what they had learnt
- Young Leadership Folders were designed and given to all, to keep all of the above documented

The folders and content provided the Young Leaders the opportunity to reflect on their journeys and be able to showcase them to potential employers and education providers.

As a result, a number have young people have already attained further employability either during, or soon after the end of the programme:

- One young person now has a job with Sheffield City Trust as a sports delivery officer – gained through interaction at the Careers event
- One young person is ready to be taken as a member of staff at Saalik
- One young person is undertaking a university placement at Saalik
- Three young people attended a taster and expressed interest in a potential 12-month opportunity at a climbing centre – one of whom is keen and likely to take on the role
- Two young people have completed a boxing tutor course
- One young person has signed up to a tutorial led by Levelling the Playing Field

Going forward, Saalik will be replicating their Youth Leadership Programme for their cohort of female participants and also building upon what they've learnt throughout this first wave, to enhance their general provision for local young people, to keep them actively learning, applying for positive opportunities and succeeding.