

Palace For Life

Case Study



BACKGROUND

Palace for Life (PfL) Foundation is the official charity of Crystal Palace F.C. which has been working with the South London community for over 25 years. Committed to enhancing the safety of young people in the borough of Croydon, PfL collaborates with various sectors, including voluntary, business, statutory, and educational, to address the root causes of youth crime and provide crucial support to vulnerable families.

Palace for Life have a clear ethos:

"Growing up in South London continues to be tougher than ever, so at Palace for Life, we are determined to ensure young people in our community are given every opportunity to succeed."

In January 2023, Palace for Life secured a £20,000 grant from the Ministry of Justice's £5m investment in supporting projects across England and Wales to use sport to enhance positive outcomes for vulnerable young people. The funding facilitated PfL to undertake targeted work supporting children and young people with a secondary level of need who may be at risk of either entering the criminal justice system or being a victim of crime. The programme was managed by The Youth Justice Sports Fund (YJSF) Consortium, which brought together StreetGames, The Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice, and the Sport for Development Coalition, who worked collaboratively to deliver the programme.

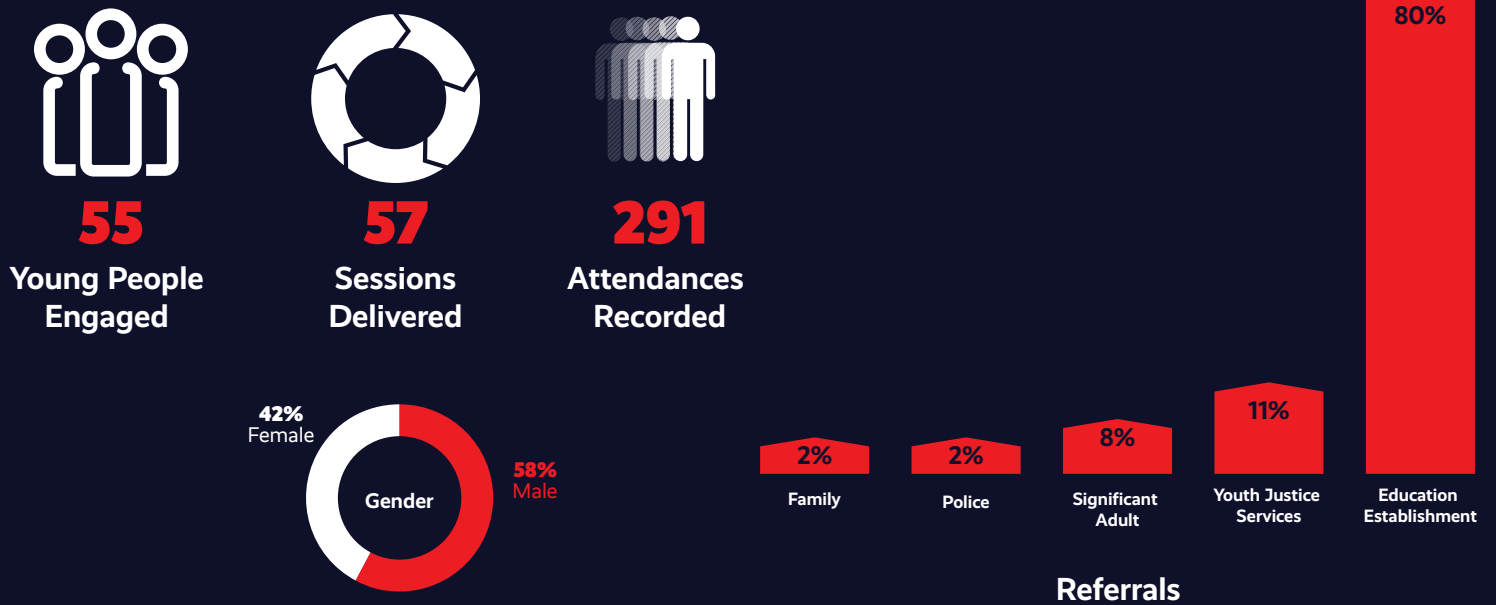
The initiative involved delivering a diverse range of activities to young people at risk, including sports, youth work, one-on-one mentoring, workshops, outdoor pursuits, residential, volunteering, and youth leadership and youth voice sessions. These activities aimed to cultivate social skills and establish support systems contributing to the positive development of the participants.

The funding from YJSF and the wrap-around support from StreetGames enabled access to essential resources, coaching expertise, equipment, and facilities needed to deliver activities. This, in turn, allowed PfL to expand its reach, providing more equipment, enrichment sessions, residential opportunities, and an increased capacity for one-on-one mentoring sessions. This also ensured that the 10 ingredients of Doorstep Sport were embedded into their community interventions that resulted in positive outcomes for those YP involved, despite them being faced with a number of challenges such as low self-esteem, poor academic performance, peer pressure, and negative engagements with the police.

DETAILS

The delivery of weekly one-on-one mentoring support and employability coaching sessions commenced in January 2023. The organisation also provided avenues for participation in a weekend residential trip to the Hindleap outdoor centre. The primary focus of these activities was to instil crucial life skills such as communication, heightened aspirations, teamwork, and leadership in the young participants.

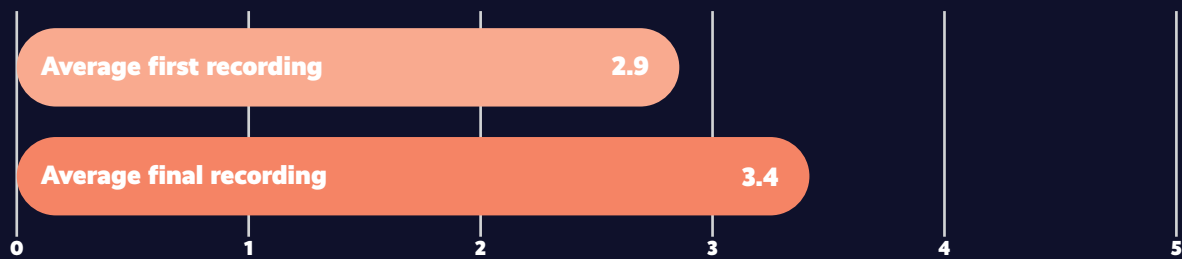
Numbers relating to engagement can be seen below:



OUTCOMES

Engagement Matrix: As part of the programme, organisations were asked to use a matrix that StreetGames had co-created with Substance and Loughborough University to review young people's engagement at sessions and how this may have changed over time. Participant's engagement was reviewed at least twice, once at the initiation of the programme or arrival of the participant, then at intervals until the end of the programme, or departure of the participant, meaning any progress made by a young person could be tracked – using the Engagement Matrix and definitions developed by Substance with StreetGames & Loughborough University – see below.

LEVEL 1 DISENGAGEMENT	LEVEL 2 CURIOSITY	LEVEL 3 INVOLVEMENT	LEVEL 4 ACHIEVEMENT	LEVEL 5 AUTONOMY
Sit out and ignore activity	Watch activity	Join in with others	Complete tasks	Initiate tasks
Encourage disputes	Dip in and out	Respond to instruction	Communicate with staff outside the activity	Help plan and run activities
Walk out	Listen to staff and peers	Enjoy good relationships	Celebrate work publicly	Praise work of others
Make negative comments	Comment on activity	Share facilities	Make connections beyond the project	Deal with conflict
Destroy/damage facilities	Talk to others about activities	Handle conflicts with maturity	Receive accreditation and gain qualifications	Volunteer
		Try on own	Attend regularly	Make 'career' choices
				Employment



The average engagement level at the programme onset was recorded at 2.9. As the program unfolded, the average engagement at the most recent session increased to 3.4, indicating a noteworthy positive shift in the participants' involvement. This positive trajectory highlights the tangible progress observed in the young people's engagement levels over the course of the programme.

Feedback received indicates that the intervention created an environment that promoted personal growth, empowered individuals to make positive choices, and strengthened community ties. Participants expressed a sense of belonging and reported improved self-esteem, marking a significant positive impact on their lives.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Activities were free and provided an easily accessible, safe, and local community facilities. The initiative focused on matching activities to young people's interests and aspirations, ensuring vibrant, fun, informal, social, welcoming, and non-pressured sessions. Clear personal development pathways were established through access to the Pfl Game on Programme and Volunteering pathways.

FUTURE

Continued investment in such initiatives will contribute to a brighter future for young people and the community. Future plans include considering financial assistance from the YJS (e.g., Turnaround Funding), continuing the delivery of enrichment and group mentoring sessions for the social and engagement development of young people, and providing support with Street Soccer Academy delivery and Croydon Youth Justice Service provision.

