

The St Matthews Project

Case Study



The St. Matthew's Project (SMP) provides a safe and encouraging environment where 3-25 year olds can come together and enjoy structured football sessions and other activities. What began as a kick-about in Brockwell Park, Lambeth is now a thriving youth project, offering a growing array of programmes and services to over 300 young people each week.

Working with funders including the Walcot Foundation, Berkeley Foundation, UK Youth, Peter Minet Trust, Lambeth Council (HAF), the Project has created a diverse and welcoming community that encourages personal growth and active participation.

ACTIVITIES

Current activities include weekly turn-up-and-play sessions for all genders; a Family Football and Literacy Programme; estate-based sports sessions; and a Fit for Life programme combining free football with mental wellbeing workshops. For those aged 16+, SMP offer free FA coaching courses, construction work training opportunities and a volunteering programme. Activities are delivered in various locations throughout Lambeth (SMP hub, Brockwell Park, Ferndale Sports Centre, Tulse Hill and St. Matthew's estates, City Heights Academy and Jubilee Primary School).



HOW

SMP has harnessed the unifying potential of sports, word of mouth, social media influence, and a dedicated youth board to create a thriving hub of community engagement. By effectively leveraging these factors, SMP has not only reached its capacity through an impressive outreach strategy but also succeeded in maintaining a high level of participation through its diverse offerings and innovative retention methods.

Community Engagement:

SMP's success story is emblematic of the power of community engagement. By skillfully tapping into the appeal of football and other sports as well as utilising the influence of word of mouth and social media with the target group, SMP manages to attract young people to attend sessions on a consistent basis throughout the year. The blend of engaging community sessions, a warm and welcoming staff, and a thoughtfully curated range of provisions has all contributed to the long-lasting success of the project.

Methods for Sustained Participation:

What sets SMP apart is its commitment to sustained participation and inclusivity. At the heart of this commitment lies a core strategy – the recruitment of former participants and the integration of the youth board. SMP's ethos of embracing diversity and inclusivity is clearly evident through the involvement of young people from various backgrounds in the Project's decision-making processes.

The impact of active engagement of young individuals with the youth board shines through the testimonials of SMP participants. Their involvement in this aspect goes beyond the confines of sports, encapsulating a more holistic approach to personal growth. By volunteering to support younger children during holiday provisions, these youth board members go beyond simply participating. They become mentors, contributors, and role models, reaping benefits that extend far beyond the boundaries of the immediate involvement in sessions, gaining skills that they can take with them into wider life.

HEADLINE STATS



19

Years in the Community



350

Participants each week



48

Hours contact per week



12,000+

Throughput each year

"The St Matthews Project has been doing amazing work bringing our young people together through football and other activities for the best part of 20 years. During this whole time, they've stayed absolutely rooted in our community and true to their principles. It's hard to overstate the amount of hard work and care that goes into running these sessions. I'm so grateful to Lee and the team for their relentless focus on seeing the potential in all our young people and helping them to fulfill it."

Bell Ribiero, MP for Streatham

"Thank you so much SMP for everything you have done for all of the boys that have passed through your hands. Thank you for creating a safe environment for the youth with so much opportunity also in growth and progression. It's a club to be extremely proud of... 'nuff respect to Coach for all the hard work you put in, not just for your boys but for the club, all the doors of opportunity you've opened. A Perfect example for the boys!"

Parent

LEARNING & KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

LEARNING

Diversity and Inclusion as Pillars of Success:

At the heart of SMP is the foundational principle of diversity and inclusion that resonates with individuals from various backgrounds. The inclusivity that permeates SMP creates an atmosphere of belonging that transcends differences, fostering a sense of unity among participants.

A Reflective Workforce and Future Possibilities:

SMP sees the community in which they work as their greatest asset and the relationships they have built up with young people, their families and other service providers in the area are fundamental to the sustainability of the project. In order to flourish and develop the necessary protective qualities, such as emotional resilience and self-esteem, young people want and need consistent, continuous and committed peer and social networks, as epitomised by the programmes SMP offer.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Empowering Youth Board:

A shining example of SMP's strength lies in its youth board, composed of participants who delve into a wide spectrum of life matters beyond the Project's operations. Youth board members and coaches recruited from within the local community, the majority of whom have come through the scheme themselves (including ex-gang members), act as inspiring and positive role models to the current participants.

'Grow Your Own' Workforce Ethos:

SMP's strategic decision to cultivate the majority of its workforce from former participants underscores its 'grow your own' ethos. This approach has borne fruit, as SMP's team is a testament to the potential of those who have followed this pathway from within the community. Notably, this strategy has enabled SMP to secure funding to introduce a dedicated mental wellbeing outreach worker, a testament to their forward-thinking approach.

Comprehensive Engagement and Support:

SMP's impact extends far beyond the football pitch. The project plays a pivotal role in the 'Safer' agenda, engaging with multi-agency teams to promote community safety for young people and their families. Additionally, the provision of mental health and well-being sessions provides a platform for young people to express their emotions in a supportive environment.

Above & Beyond:

The SMP staff are always there for the young people they work with, including away from sessions. Staff often visit young people at schools or other community venues to offer their mentoring support and expertise, this flexibility and dedication is greatly appreciated by the beneficiaries.

STREETGAMES SUPPORT



Investment Support



Training & Qualifications



Partnerships Working



Impact Measurement



Inspirational Opportunities



People Beside the People

StreetGames supported St Matthews Project by:

Additional investment support over the years: Doorstep Sports Clubs, Together Fund, Fit and Fed, Us Girls Football, Sport England, Greater London Authority.

StreetGames Training Academy: Level 2 Multi-Skills Development, Level 2 Apprenticeship, Managing Challenging Behaviour, Table Tennis Activator, Boxing Fitness, Mental Health Awareness

Sport 4 Good Partnerships & Cluster work: Collaborating with other like-minded organisations locally, regionally & nationally.

Impact Measurement Support: via case studies, testimonial templates, community safety participant surveys & access to the Views M&E system.

Inspirational Opportunities: free tickets to various elite sports events including Boxing & football. Regional participation events including football tournaments & multisport festivals.

People Beside the People: supporting SMP to plan and prepare for the future by developing a project development plan together with short, medium & long-term objectives.

