

# Project Evaluation Report

## Regular Fun Football – Children and Young People

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# Weekly Fun Football

Annual project evaluation

## Project Funder/Sponsor

Awards For All, Sport England, Sported, and Donations

## Project Partners

Yuvanis Foundation

## Project Timescale

Ongoing

## Project Purpose

The weekly fun football sessions organized by Yuvanis Foundation serve as a vibrant and inclusive platform for boys and girls aged 7 and above. These sessions are meticulously designed to be more than just football training; they provide a welcoming and supportive environment where young people can socialise, exercise, and enhance their physical health. Emphasising inclusivity, the initiative goes a step further by offering exclusive girls-only football sessions, fostering an environment where everyone, irrespective of their footballing interests or skills, feels encouraged to participate. Through these engaging sessions, we aim to not only nurture football talent but also promote overall wellbeing and a sense of community among the youth.

## Expected Benefits and Outcomes

- Better physical and mental health for children and young people
- Social inclusion and community building
- Skill development and confidence building

## Summary of Findings

Through thorough research and community consultations in Oldham and Rochdale, it was evident that children, in particular, engaged infrequently in sports and recreation outside of school. In response, we were led to the inception of the Fun Football project. This innovative initiative targets not just children interested in playing football, but young people from all backgrounds, interests and skills.

Over more than two years of delivering our fun football sessions, we've observed a host of positive outcomes. The initiative has successfully increased community engagement, with both boys and girls actively participating. The project's impact extends beyond the physical benefits, notably contributing to enhanced well-being and positive mental health outcomes.






The establishment of girls-only football sessions has played a pivotal role in promoting inclusivity, challenging gender norms, and creating a supportive environment. Beyond the football field, participants have developed valuable life skills, including teamwork and leadership, leading to increased self-esteem and confidence.

Importantly, the success of the project has influenced not only the participants but also their families and the broader community. It has become a focal point for social interaction and community building, reinforcing the need for continued community-driven sports initiatives.

As we reflect on these findings, it's evident that the fun football sessions have become a cornerstone of our community engagement efforts, aligning seamlessly with Yuvanis Foundation's commitment to holistic development. The sustained success of the project underscores the ongoing need for initiatives that blend physical activity with social engagement, positively shaping lives and fostering a more connected and resilient community.

## Outputs

The below outputs are weekly averages based on 100 sessions delivered over 24 months:

 Females	 Males	
<b>21</b>	<b>34</b>	
 No. of Sessions	 Ages Range	 % of Main Target
<b>100</b>	<b>5–16 years</b>	<b>79%</b>

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## Impact

Our regular fun and inclusive football project has had a profound impact on the children and young people, transcending the traditional understanding of football, physical activity and social connections. The innovative approach of targeting children of all interests rather than only individuals with interest in football has been a game-changer. Over the course of the last 24 months, the project's influence was multi-faceted.

The project has successfully addressed the observed reluctance of many children, particularly those uninterested in football, to engage in sports and recreation as a way of improving the wellbeing and social connections. By creating a supportive environment within a popular sports setting, individuals are not only encouraged to develop their football skills but to also socialise, make new friends and work together. The inclusive and non-judgmental nature of the project provides a unique and enjoyable perspective for children to embrace a common sport which they may not otherwise enjoy due to lack of skills and interest.

The impact extends beyond physical health, delving into the dynamics of community. The fun football sessions have, on many occasions, facilitated an environment where other challenges and issues faced by young people could be addressed. For example, last year, the fun football was used as a platform to educate and raise awareness of hate crimes among young people, and served as a contact point on a weekly basis to support and refer any hate crimes or incidents. The football sessions are not just to help children improve in football, but also allows us to target young people for wider support. A large percentage of the children that attend our weekly football sessions also attend many of our other activities such as boxercise, cycling, and holiday activities that address other needs after positive experiences in our football sessions.

The project has observed many children who were very reserved, lacked confidence, and were disengaged in the beginning of their journey with us, later building their confidence, having fun, and making new meaningful relationships with other children.

In conclusion, the impact of the Fun Football project goes beyond promoting physical activity; it often becomes a catalyst for transformative change within children and young people. By combining physical health promotion with an inclusive and non-judgmental platform, the project exemplifies the potential for innovative approaches to address health disparities within the young people. The ongoing success of this initiative suggests the importance of inclusive and supportive initiatives in reshaping attitudes and behaviors toward health and wellbeing.

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## Outcomes

- Increased physical activities among young people
- Most children attending on a weekly basis return every week
- Steady increase in attendance
- Children signposted for wider support and other initiatives
- Increased self-confidence
- Skills development

## Success Factors

- Co-designing with participants during the planning and delivery of project
- Participants always treated as individuals and not numbers
- Sessions are led by competent and qualified volunteers
- Venue is well situated and easily accessible from all parts of Oldham.

## Recommendations

- Increase coaching elements to cater to those who want to pursue football as a career

## Case Study

Ismail Islam, aged 8, initially joined our regular football sessions during the Summer of 2022, displaying a reserved and hesitant demeanor. Early engagement posed a challenge, as he stood on the pitch with minimal movement, only sporadically interacting with the ball. After just three sessions, a positive transformation occurred. With continuous support from our coach, Ismail's confidence blossomed, and he began participating more actively. While lacking fundamental football skills, his enjoyment became evident as he frequented the sessions.

Interestingly, weeks later, Ismail expressed to one of our volunteers that his primary motivation wasn't a deep interest in football but rather the opportunity to connect with friends and get away from weekend boredom. This experience resonates with many participants in our sessions, highlighting the broader social and recreational benefits beyond the sport itself.

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**“I have been to so many other football sessions in different places. But I enjoy Yuvanis Football the most because I can play however I want and nobody tells me off or looks down on me. I can mistakes, take a break, have fun without worrying about my team losing”**

***A quote from Ibraheem Ali, an 11-year-old boy who regularly attends our football sessions.***