

The Power of Sport For Good



The Calacus White Paper 2024



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Introduction

Organisations around the world are well aware of the power of sport to make a difference to society.

As Nelson Mandela put it at the inaugural Laureus World Sports Awards in Monaco: "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does.

"It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination."

People can learn new skills, grow confidence, transform communities and turn conflict into understanding through the medium of sport.

The International Olympic Committee and the United Nations have been at the forefront of sporting initiatives to act as a catalyst for sustainable urban growth.

The Sport for Sustainable Urban Development Initiative is part of the IOC's Olympism365 strategy – which uses sport to promote sustainable development – and involves engagement with UN-Habitat's extensive networks of city leaders and officials.

In 2024, the IOC and UN-Habitat signed a five-year memorandum of understanding focused on driving progress in three key areas:

- Health: promoting active lifestyles and physical well-being in urban communities.
- Social inclusion: building more equitable, inclusive societies through the unifying power of sport.
- Urban regeneration: revitalising city spaces to be greener, safer and more sustainable.

Whether it is providing education for refugees or disadvantaged children on a local level or providing ways to grow, sport for good works. In the 'Contribution of sport to society and the economy' report published by the UK's House of Lords in 2024, sporting benefits can help build stronger communities by bringing people together.

"Sport is widely seen as a way for people of different backgrounds to interact and integrate by taking part, volunteering and spectating.

"It can provide opportunities...to bridge divides between men and women, homeless people and those who are not homeless, and people with different employment backgrounds."

There is also evidence that sport can help to reduce crime according to a College of Policing evaluation of sports-based interventions, which generated significant economic impacts such as savings for the public purse and lifetime education and employment impacts.

Research undertaken by Manchester Metropolitan University found a positive association between sport participation in school and higher levels of wellbeing for young people, providing a "significant predictor of self-belief and mental toughness, key life skills for young people."

The following case studies celebrate organisations that have invested time and resources in making a difference to society through sport.

While there are commercial and reputational benefits in doing so, there is no doubt that sport has the opportunity to make meaningful change to society.

Laureus Sport for Good

PROJECT OUTLINE

Laureus Sport for Good is a global leader in the sport for development sector, supporting and connecting over 300 sports-based community programmes in more than 40 countries.

Laureus doesn't just fund programmes – it invests in them; amplifying their impact.

Their vision is to use sport as a powerful and cost-effective tool to help children and young people overcome violence, discrimination and disadvantage in their lives.

Training coaches to use sport for wider success beyond the competition, Laureus has built networks of some of the most impactful expertise in the world in this field over the past 25 years, and now shares this knowledge, enabling programmes to grow faster, reach further, and change more lives.



KEY STATISTICS

- Supported 300 programmes across 40 countries and territories with funding, training, and other technical assistance
- Directly impacted more than 240,000 children and young people
- 6,000 young women have been impacted as Play Academy
- Over the last 20 years Laureus Sport for Good has raised more than €150m for the Sport for Development sector

CASE STUDY

Play Academy with Naomi Osaka is a partnership initiative between Naomi Osaka, Laureus Sport for Good and Nike with the goal to change girls' lives through play and sport. It was launched in 2020 in Japan as part of the 'Gender and Sport Coaching program.'

The programme provides grants and capacity-building training for community organisations. It emphasises fun and positive play experiences. The coaches are trained in gender inclusivity as well as creating a positive culture where they are empowering young women to become role models.

Laureus oversees the grant selection and management process for Play Academy, with 10 local programmes having been supported across all three sites – Japan, Los Angeles and Haiti.

Laureus also leads in the delivery of training for programmes Play Academy supports, with topics covering safeguarding, gender inclusion and engaging girls in sports.

Naomi Osaka began playing tennis at an early age and believes in the power of sport to create bigger change. Having had a number of role models in her life – both on and off the court – and as a champion of equity, Naomi understands the importance of removing the barriers that girls face in sport and in life.

A multi-Grand Slam champion, she teamed up with Laureus and Nike to bring Play Academy to life, where she's been able to leverage her personal experiences as an athlete and her passion to help change the game for girls.



Almost 6,000 young women have been impacted as Play Academy continues its aim to help level the playing field by increasing girls' participation in sport.

Since 2020 the project has expanded to Haiti and Los Angeles. In Haiti, 'GOALS' has been set up which supports young women through soccer, education and community services and within Los Angeles kids have teamed up with local volunteer coaches to get young people with intellectual disabilities moving.

A Coaching Guide has also been made available at the COACH THE DREAM – CHANGING SPORT FOR GIRLS summit held in Tokyo in October. The multi-day event featured coach trainings; discussions among experts and athletes; and a day of play for 40 girls from the local community, who were also treated to a special surprise visit from Naomi Osaka and five-time Olympic gold medallist swimmer Missy Franklin.

NFL Foundation UK

PROJECT OUTLINE

The NFL Foundation UK, launched in 2021, aims to harness the NFL's growing UK presence to drive lasting social impact nationwide.

The foundation aims to address inequality and limited opportunities by empowering young people aged 11-20. Through NFL Flag, it helps them unlock their potential, pursue positive pathways, and take charge of their futures.

The goal is to support areas with high deprivation and low physical activity – key indicators of inequality – by offering grants and community training, co-creating bespoke partnerships addressing unique local challenges faced by young people.



KEY STATISTICS

- Over 6,250 young people have engaged
- Of these 51% identify as female and 78% from a diverse ethnic background
- 60% of participants are from the top 30% most deprived communities nationally
- 63% increase in young people feeling positive about themselves

NFL Flag is expanding non-contact American football to young athletes worldwide. Fast-paced and inclusive, it's one of the fastest-growing sports globally, with women and girls leading the surge in participation.

NFL Flag sessions, delivered by their partners, bring the excitement and energy of the NFL to life, featuring vibrant activities, high-energy music, and an inclusive atmosphere. As a new sport for many, NFL Flag offers an accessible experience where young people can build confidence and engagement.

The Foundation UK delivers work in London, through a partnership with the Mayor of London, in Birmingham and Greater Manchester, through the support of Sport England and in Leeds, as a result of an exciting collaboration between the Foundation, the San Francisco 49ers and the Leeds United Foundation.

The Foundation UK has also partnered with Nike and Tottenham Hotspur to launch The Huddle Project which integrates soccer and NFL Flag football sessions, delivering employment training and industry insights to young people and provide pathways into the sports industry.

In 2024, HRH Prince William participated in an NFL Foundation UK session in South London during the NFL London Games, highlighting the program's social impact for young people in the UK.

CASE STUDY

The NFL Foundation UK has partnered with BIGKID Foundation to provide a female-focused NFL Flag football programme delivering support to 11-18 year olds, combating physical and mental inequalities in Lambeth, Newham, Lewisham and Hounslow. The Foundation equips young people at risk of social exclusion and youth violence to take control of their lives.

Jochebed, who is a beneficiary of the BIGKID Foundation, said: “At BIGKID what I enjoy most about NFL Flag is the social aspect. Playing with different people helps you develop not only as an athlete but also as a person.

“I can happily say that I am much more confident in myself now, BIGKID and NFL Flag has helped me to blossom out of my shell. I now proudly advocate for other young people to participate freely in NFL Flag without the judgement of feeling like they aren’t good enough or won’t fit in.

“Since starting NFL Flag, it has positively impacted my motivation to achieve and be the best version of myself in all aspects.

“I would love to be a Sport Physiotherapist or Psychologist and along with these jobs comes the need for skills like communication, rapport, sensitivity and understanding.

“Over the years I have been able to develop these key skills because of NFL Flag. I am also proud to be an active member of my community.

“I have been part of the youth forum for my Housing Association for just under two years and enjoy sharing my thoughts around female safety in the community.”



DoGood

PROJECT OUTLINE

Philip 'Theo' Lin was missing his school-wide community service day. As he was en-route to a fencing tournament, he realised: "Why couldn't I bring the community service to where I am when I am competing? Why couldn't I just serve in the local community where my tournament is?"

Each month, Theo competes in a national tournament hosted by USA Fencing, where thousands of fencers are traveling with their family and coaches to a single city in the US for three or four days. Realising the enormous potential that this number of fencers and their families could have on the local communities in the cities, Theo assembled a team of competitive fencers like himself – and founded DoGood.

DoGood's mission is to provide opportunities for fencers to give back to local communities where they are competing. The team seeks to encourage the fencing community to "Do good anywhere!" whether that be at a tournament or at home.

DoGood has only been in existence for a few months, but it envisions a future where youth athletes across all sports use their platform to serve their communities, inspired by the strong culture of youth sports in the US.



PROJECT DETAILS

- Local food banks
- Rescue mission with those who have addiction
- Animal shelters giving a voice to hundreds who cannot speak
- International organisations that provide free housing
- Supporting families with children in hospitals

DoGood hopes other sports will adopt their model of integrating community service with athletic competition.

In the words of the Dalai Lama, Theo explained his vision: "“When you drop a single pebble into water, it creates ripples that spread out. So imagine what happens when you drop not one, but 10, 20, 100 pebbles into the water...it can create waves.”"

Additional projects being planned for the future include introducing fencing to local communities, with an emphasis on reaching women and girls in order to promote gender equality in the sport; organising fencing camps for urban young people in Puerto Rico; and partnering with other grassroots local volunteer organisations started by fencers.



CASE STUDY

DoGood's first project brought them to Columbus, Ohio where they partnered with Broad Street Food Pantry (BSFP). Over two days, athletes and other people within the fencing community worked to restock shelves in the pantry, bag groceries for people in the community who were struggling to feed their families, and deliver meal bags to seniors in a nearby low-income senior housing facility.

Individuals who have received groceries from BSFP or volunteered with the organisation are likely to be familiar with Alex. He has been a full-time volunteer for 10 years and helps to run the volunteer program, teaching how to fill grocery orders. Alex is familiar with the feeling of not having enough to eat as he is a lifelong beneficiary of BSFP. As a child, his dinner table was often furnished with groceries provided by BSFP and other pantries. Even now, all of Alex's daily food needs come from pantries like BSFP.

Sadly, Alex is not alone in relying on BSFP for his daily food needs. More than 13.5% of Franklin County residents struggle with putting food on the table daily. Ohio's school system is a leader in offering universal free lunch to all students, removing the stigma of those needing school meals. However, during summer break, many children who rely on these meals suddenly lack access to healthy food. Parents often turn to pantries like BSFP, which provides food to about 15,000 children annually.

Kathy Kelly-Long, the Director of BSFP, states that nobody is going there just because it's fun. Most people would rather go to the grocery store with their own money and buy exactly what they want. The idea that 'if people are hungry, they'll eat anything' is maybe true on some level, but how does that respect their dignity?

Their mission is to not only feed individuals, but to feed them healthy and nutritious food. Each grocery bag provided includes enough protein for three meals, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables, some of which are harvested from local farms. Kathy explains: "Everyone needs good quality nutrition, but it's even more critical for children. If children aren't well-nourished, their performance in school goes down. If you don't eat well, you don't grow well, you don't learn well."



KEY STATISTICS

- BSFP serves approximately 45,000 individuals, one-third of them children, annually distributing
- 260,000 lbs of shelf-stable food
- 100,000 lbs of fresh produce
- 10,000 gallons of milk
- 10,000 dozens of eggs
- 70% staffed by volunteers, which equals the cost of food for 400 people
- Continued increase of 20% in new families each week

UN Football

PROJECT OUTLINE

Football for the Goals (FFTG) is a United Nations initiative that galvanises the global football community around sustainability and human rights.

Recognising football's unparalleled popularity and accessibility, FFTG leverages football's global reach to raise awareness and inspire action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Over 320 football organisations have joined FFTG, ranging from all six continental confederations (AFC, CAF, Concacaf, CONMEBOL, OFC and UEFA), dozens of national associations and leagues and professional clubs to NGOs, foundations and players' unions.



Members commit to becoming active agents of change, incorporating sustainable practices, and amplifying SDG messaging through their platforms.

Football tournaments, player advocacy, brand exposure, and fan engagement are some of the ways FFTG members use their visibility to spotlight sustainability and inclusivity.

KEY STATISTICS

- FFTG initiative has 320+ members from 87 countries across all six continental confederations
- Comprised of over 100 civil society organisations, 42 national football associations, 12 leagues, and more than 50 football clubs
- FFTG members focus on SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 13: Climate Action

FFTG members embrace their responsibility to help create a sustainable future rooted in equality and equity, and they demonstrate how sustainable practices can integrate seamlessly into any business model, including sport.

Members also gain unique opportunities to connect with global football organisations, UN experts, and like-minded advocates. as well as exclusive access to UN resources, including newsletters, social media assets, and branding tools.

With representation currently spanning 87 countries, FFTG members exemplify how football can be a powerful force for positive change across the globe.

Together, its members harness the spirit of the game to champion a more sustainable and inclusive world.

CASE STUDY

Football for All in Vietnam (FFAV), a grassroots programme, uses football to promote sustainable development and social inclusion across Vietnam, in 15 provinces and 400 football clubs, reaching over 100,000 children annually, 50% of whom are women and girls.

The initiatives have successfully supported over 30 girls in joining Vietnam's U14 National Team, with the Ministry of Education and Training now incorporating FFAV's framework into its National Programme on Safe Sport Clubs in Schools.

In recognition of these efforts, FFAV was awarded the Asian Football Confederation's Best Grassroots Project in 2024.

The Global Youth Forum (GYF) is a youth-focused organisation in Kenya dedicated to combating poverty through coaching, mentorship, and sports programs.

GYF hosts Football4Peace, a series of tournaments focusing on the SDGs. To win, teams must succeed on the field and demonstrate their project's impact.

For each goal scored, three fruit trees are planted with a goal of planting 10,000 fruit trees annually. Since 2015, GYF has organised over 15 tournaments, involving 148 football teams and 48 corporate partners.



Leicester Nirvana FC, an amateur football club in Leicester, UK. It is redefining grassroots football by turning themselves into a force for sustainability, inclusivity, and community empowerment.

They are the first UK amateur club to commit to net-zero carbon emissions by 2030 and exemplify how sports can bridge gaps in equality and environmental justice.



adidas Move For The Planet

PROJECT OUTLINE

adidas' Move For The Planet initiative is a campaign built to inspire everyday athletes and beyond, to track movement that is then converted into funding for local sustainable sports infrastructure in areas that are susceptible to extreme weather conditions.

'Move For The Planet' 2024 has been supporting eight programs across six countries, by improving climate resilient infrastructures and introducing sustainability education modules for local communities.

Beneficiary programs include Youth Football Club Rurka Kalan and Enabling Leadership in India, Fútbol con Corazón and ISF Cambodia in Cambodia, Game in Lebanon, Football for All in Vietnam, Organization Earth in Greece, and the U.S. Soccer Foundation.

By 2025, this will result in 10 completed infrastructures refurbished across the eight programs – including the refurbishment of three full-sized football pitches, three multi-sport pitches, two education centres, one spectator stand and one community sports stadium.

Facilities will receive adaptations such as new solar energy systems, water drainage and purification systems and equipment storage facilities built to withstand changing weather conditions.



In 2024 adidas partnered with UNFCCC to develop and deploy training programs for grassroots and sports organisations around sustainable actions.

In 2025, adidas will run the app tracking initiative again from May 12-25.

KEY STATISTICS

- Donated €1 for every ten minutes of exercise logged on the adidas Running app during May 2024
- Over 15,000 individuals benefited from new sustainability education
- Over 21,000 people had access to the improved sporting facilities
- In 2024 adidas refurbished three full sized football pitches, three multi-sport pitches, two education centres, one spectator stand and one community sports stadium

Ashley Czarnowski, Senior Director, Global Purpose Marketing at adidas said: "Whether it's taking part at the grassroots or competing at the highest level, we all have a deep connection to the places we play. Together we can unite as a global sporting community to help some of those places."

CASE STUDY

love.fútbol and adidas have partnered to create a safe space for women and the community to practice sport in the Xalostoc region of Mexico.

Extreme weather conditions are having an increasing impact on the places people play and practice sport, with water scarcity in Mexico effecting many aspects of the community.

Violence against women is also prevalent in Xalostoc so love.fútbol have launched a development called La Cancha Violeta, which saw recycled materials used to create an eco-friendly pitch, with solar power lighting and a rainwater harvesting system to water the grass.

Activities including football and boxing classes, while educational workshops focused on water conservation will seek to develop social skills and positive values among the girls and boys in the community.



The adidas community looks to fund global programs focused on improving access to sport and education for under-represented groups in local communities.

La Cancha Violeta represents a safe haven for women and girls to enjoy equal access to the many benefits and lessons of sports.

Creating a closer community where one shared value and vision bring everyone together as a team is a real drive for the 'Move For The Planet' initiative.

Sport is a universal language that teaches inclusivity and equality, linking values such as teamwork, respect and leadership, which are so important when the community is so diverse.

The new space has attracted more people to football and it's an area where they can train, not just score goals.

FundLife

PROJECT OUTLINE

Since its inception in 2017, the Girls Community League (GCL) has been at the forefront of addressing systemic challenges faced by vulnerable girls in the Philippines.

GCL was designed to tackle critical issues such as the high drop-out rates from public schools, the alarming rise in teenage pregnancies, and the severe learning poverty exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

These challenges, compounded by widespread poverty, have left many girls with limited access to education, safe spaces, and life opportunities.

GCL leverages the transformative power of sports as a tool for protection, education, and empowerment.

By fostering mentorship, community engagement, and equitable access to opportunities, GCL empowers girls to stay in school, build resilience, and aspire for a better future.



The program also works closely with parents, schools, and local leaders to strengthen community support systems and create environments where girls can thrive despite socio-economic challenges.

Through its holistic approach, GCL not only addresses the immediate risks of school drop-out and early pregnancies but also promotes long-term social inclusion, gender equity, and the development of essential life skills.

GCL inspires girls to pursue education, overcome adversity, and break the cycle of poverty.

GCL's efforts continue to create ripples of hope, opportunity, and resilience in communities most affected by inequality.

From September 2023 to 2024, GCL conducted 400 after-school play sessions and 400 study support sessions, reaching 400 students. The initiative also organised 40 mini-tournaments and six educational festivals, fostering confidence, teamwork, and holistic growth for both girls and boys.

KEY STATISTICS

- GCL has reduced school drop-out rates among enrolled participants from 14% to less than 1%*
- Participation in structured and safe sports increased by 600% between 2017 and 2020
- 30% of participants have become varsity athletes, mentors, or coaches

CASE STUDY

Lyra Mae, affectionately known as ‘Coach Lyra,’ is a dedicated youth mentor at FundLife, inspiring change across 16 partner schools and three community sites in Tacloban City.

Once a Girls Community League (GCL) participant, Lyra is now a driving force in gender equity and youth empowerment, using sports and mentorship to foster inclusion and opportunity.

The Girls Community League (GCL) played a pivotal role in Lyra’s journey. By addressing gender disparities in sports and leadership, GCL offered young girls a platform to excel in futsal – a space traditionally dominated by males.



Through mentorship, life skills training, and leadership opportunities, Lyra has challenged societal barriers. The program also had a positive impact on her academics, boosting her performance and increasing her involvement in school-related activities.

Lyra’s transformation from GCL participant to mentor underscores the program’s success in cultivating future leaders. Armed with technical skills, leadership abilities, and a passion for inclusivity, she now mentors young girls and boys, creating spaces where everyone has the chance to succeed.

Lyra said: “I realised that every young leader has the potential to do big things. If given the right opportunities and platforms, all of us can bring about a huge change in society. There will be many hurdles and obstacles. People might doubt you and your dreams, but keep going!

“When we help uplift each other, we make a difference. Every roadblock can be overcome if we have a clear vision and good intentions. Young leaders across society can be beacons of change. All of us together can make this world a better place.”

Lyra spearheads initiatives that empower youth, using football to teach life skills, build resilience, and challenge gender stereotypes, while her mentorship efforts guide young girls to embrace leadership roles and foster inclusion. As a coach, mentor, and advocate, Lyra inspires the next generation to possess the tools, confidence, and support to create a more equitable world. 15

Common Goal

PROJECT OUTLINE

Sport is increasingly impacted by climate change – frozen and flooded pitches, extreme heat affecting athlete health, and limited access to sport for vulnerable communities. Sport being played is a crucial role in communities worldwide.

Common Goal is a global impact movement that exists to unite the football community to tackle the world's biggest challenges. It aims to inspire everyone in football to play a meaningful role in the well-being of our people and planet.

With support from adidas as part of its ground-breaking Move for the Planet initiative, Common Goal and Football for Future launched the Fields of Change handbook, offering practical guidance to make environmentally-minded decisions.

The Handbook includes topics such as: Understanding Sustainability and Climate Change, Sustainability in Sport, Sustainable Infrastructure, Waste Management, Climate Communication, and Sport and Sustainability Leadership.



The Fields of Change handbook has already seen positive impacts, with organisations like Organization Earth in Greece tackling plastic pollution and recycling in refugee camps, and Fútbol con Corazón in Colombia, which is launching a recycling business to repurpose plastic waste.

adidas has funded global projects that educate and engage communities on sustainability and enhance sports facilities to withstand extreme weather conditions, showcasing the collective power of the sporting community to drive change to build a more sustainable future.

The innovation has been celebrated by the community by numerous athletes and leaders.

Jérémy Houssin, Common Goal Sustainability and Environmental Lead said: "Sport is a powerful unifier, and through Fields of Change, we're mobilising that power to respond to one of humanity's biggest challenges: climate change."

CASE STUDY

Alexei Rojas, a 19-year-old goalkeeper, has been inspiring change behind the scenes at Arsenal and in the wider football world through his sustainability campaigning.

His passion for sustainability began aged 10, after being educated by his mum who works as a risk manager for a wind farm company. Since then Rojas has been doing everything in his power to make a difference.

“Ever since I’ve been at Arsenal I’ve had the opportunity to speak up about it and drive change within the club.

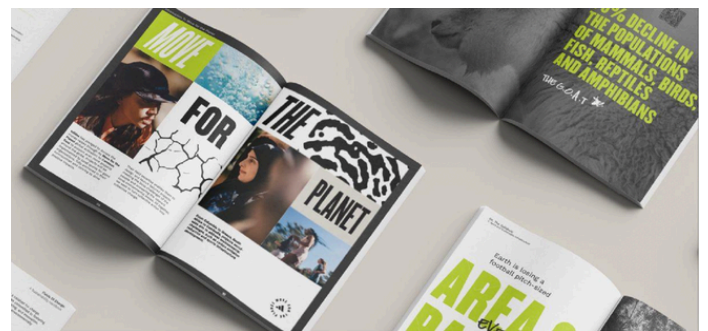


“Certain things have changed, mainly around recycling bins, eliminating single-use plastics and more operational things around energy use – where we’re getting our energy from and the type of light bulbs at Hale End.

“More recently I’ve been speaking up about the link between sport and sustainability and how the two go hand-in-hand, not only because sport has such a big negative impact because of travel, logistics, operations and fans, but also because football has such a big audience worldwide and has such a big impact on people and their day-to-day lives.

KEY STATISTICS

- Since 1970 there has been a 70% decline in the population of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians
- By 2054, plastic in oceans will outweigh fish
- By 2032 temperature rise will be above 1.5°C



“If we can push sustainability messages and get people involved through sport then I think we can make real collective change.

“The way I look at it is that you can’t be 100 per cent perfect. There’s always going to be some impact and, at the end of the day, football is still a performance industry where the number one goal is to win, not to be as sustainable as we can be.

“But within that, what matters is that football organisations are able to still control what they can control, in terms of being able to influence fans, not producing loads of waste, or using lots of plastic and being able to push positive sustainability messages.

“We should take a leadership position in advancing the conversation around climate action to take solid steps collectively every single day, no matter how modest.

“It’s important to understand that it’s not perfect but nothing can be. You do what you can, because it’s always better to do something instead of nothing.”

Arsenal

PROJECT OUTLINE

Football clubs have been at the heart of their communities for decades – their impact stretching way beyond the pitch to help shape and define the communities.

The stated purpose for Premier League giants Arsenal is: “Arsenal acts for a winning team, community and culture.”

Their first Economic and Social Impact Report “highlights our longstanding commitment to driving economic and social progress, which we deliver through numerous community-focused initiatives including the work of Arsenal in the Community and our registered charity, The Arsenal Foundation.”

Managing Director Richard Garlick said, “Arsenal brings so much to our community beyond the football we play. Creating a sense of belonging and driving progress in our communities has been central to who we are since we were established in 1886.

“We cherish that heritage and the positive impact we continue to make. Optimism and opportunity surround us today, and our future is incredibly exciting.

“We want to channel that into more positive action that will deepen our impact across our communities.



“We hope the report, along with the stories shared by people in our local community, will bring to life the contribution Arsenal makes to the prosperity of the local communities we serve and the impact we have beyond Islington too.”

Arsenal’s activities are diverse.

The London Borough of Islington, where the Gunners reside, has high levels of deprivation and child poverty and the Club sits on many strategic boards to support the council.

Arsenal provides grants for local projects that address key local social issues including education, youth safety, unemployment and health inequality.

The Club have partnered with Save the Children to support international projects addressing the challenges facing young people.

In 2020, they were the first Premier League club to endorse the UN Sport for Climate Action Framework and became the first club in the world to have a net-zero target approved by the globally respected Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi).

KEY STATISTICS

- Delivered £616 million in economic value (GVA) to the UK economy
- 4,400 jobs supported in the UK and 1,600 local jobs in Islington
- 14,000 people participated in AITC initiatives
- Over 3,700 young people engaged in the ‘Coaching for Life’ programme

CASE STUDY

The Positive Futures Programme, which marked its 20th anniversary in 2024, works in partnership with the London Borough of Islington.

The diverse programme is designed to improve the lives of individuals living in local estates across the borough.

Whilst the programme has evolved during that time, the approach and core values remain the same: using engagement through the Club to provide a sense of belonging and help individuals and communities thrive.

The Positive Futures Programme engages over 500 young people aged 7-16 through weekly football activities. These sessions take place five evenings a week, on seven estates throughout Islington, across 48 weeks of the year.

Combining football, sports activities, mentoring, and pathways into community volunteering and employment. The sessions provide young participants with valuable opportunities for personal development and access to broader avenues of growth.

The approach of the Positive Futures Programme has led to the development of wider AITC programmes with health-based initiatives being taken to local estates.

The bowls programme is designed to tackle social isolation and loneliness amongst the elderly — taking place in five community centres each week, as well as educational clubs for school children taking place after-school.

An important part of the work of AITC focuses on the progression of participants onto other programmes delivered by the department, including Post-16 Education Provision and Employability Schemes.

Kai Brennan, who is now an Arsenal in the Community coach, talks about his transformative experience with Positive Futures: “The first time I heard about Positive Futures, I was very little – I was about seven years old. I remember walking through Harvist Estate with my mum and my twin.

“As I grew up, my life was tough, I think that’s where my challenging situation began. I didn’t like education, so I didn’t want to try and push for higher grades. I wasn’t ambitious.

“Knowing it was free was a huge relief. The first session I went to, I just remember being happy in the environment. The coaches were great, supportive, and ensured that I was in a safe environment.

“Being part of social inclusion has changed me in a positive way – it’s made me feel ambitious and given me a goal to push towards, which is to be a fully licensed football coach.

“Being part of Arsenal is like being part of a family – you support each other no matter what. It also gives me the confidence to take on any challenges that come my way and to try new things whether it be within Arsenal or outside of Arsenal. I’m prouder of myself than I have ever been.”

Raising Her Game

PROJECT OUTLINE

Raising Her Game was founded by England hockey player Darcy Bourne to improve diversity and representation in girls' sport.

Darcy said: "Sport has brought me joy, growth and countless opportunities. Everyone deserves to experience the benefits sport offers, but unfortunately it isn't accessible and inclusive of everyone.

"I've never had many teammates or a role model in my sport that looks like me. We need to change this. I'm determined to break barriers, provide role models, and inspire a generation of diverse little girls to find their potential and pursue their dreams.

Raising Her Game inspires girls to get active through a three-pillar approach:

OUTREACH – Raising Her Game offers free girls-only sports sessions in local state primary schools with high pupil premium funding.

CAMPS – Running free holiday camps for young girls from underrepresented groups. These camps are led by female coaches, athletes and young leaders from diverse backgrounds, providing inspirational role models.

LEGACY – Engaging with girls' families to encourage further involvement in sport, partnering with local organisations to encourage girls to continue with their chosen sport, ensuring free or subsidised membership and kit to reduce barriers.



KEY STATISTICS

- 200+ girls participated in hockey sessions, with 40 girls accepted onto the camp
- 66% reported feeling more confident about trying new sports
- 71% expressed interest in attending another camp
- 79% appreciated the girls-only aspect of the camp
- 85% want to play hockey again
- 59% wanted to play rugby again



Raising Her Game works with National Governing Bodies also ensures more accessible participation, and better connections from grassroots to elite sporting pathways.

Their first sports camp was delivered in October 2024, in Tower Hamlets, one of the most ethnically diverse and deprived boroughs in London.

The girls participated in hockey and rugby sessions, a tug-of-war and took part in an engaging 'Talk Time' with founder Darcy Bourne.

They discussed what it means to be a sporty girl, the challenges they face as being sporty girls, and the realities of being a professional athlete.

CASE STUDY

Amira and Eloise are 8-year old twin girls that attended the October Camp, which featured a range of sports in one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in London.

Neither of the girls play sport outside school and had not attended a sports camp before.

Both the girls recalled said that they enjoyed the experience, and said that they would be excited to attend another camp.

When asked how they felt about attending camp with other girls and female sports coaches, both Amira and Eloise said that they enjoyed playing both hockey and rugby.

They would like more camps run by girls as it gives them role models to look up to. Amira added that she would like to play football matches with just girls and coaches.

When we asked the girls' mum whether she had anything to say about the girls' experience at camp, she said: "I loved that it was an all girls camp, as you don't see much of them about and would love to empower my daughters to believe in themselves that they can do anything they put their minds to."

"I would love to have more local camps for them to try outside of school that is accessible."



In 2025, Raising Her Game will host two additional two-day camps in East London.

These camps are set to engage over 300 girls in schools and more than 120 girls at camp.

As part of their vision for steady growth, they aim to expand and offer camps throughout London by 2030.



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