



“Working with communities to learn how to serve them best”



2023/24

ANNUAL REPORT

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Statement from our Managing Director

Reflecting on the past year, I am filled with a sense of pride. Sporting Communities has excelled in our community development services, pioneering innovative projects and providing much needed services and assets at a time when many communities have continued to be underinvested in.

At the heart of our achievements lie our core values. We remain steadfast in our dedication to serving communities with the highest standards of quality and reliability. This is reflected not only in our frontline practices, but also in the way that we have influenced national partners to embrace local needs in their strategic planning.

The team has demonstrated an unwavering commitment and integrity, going above and beyond to ensure that vulnerable, underrepresented and marginalised individuals have the support they require and opportunity to thrive.

For the coming year we look forward to embracing change, turning obstacles into opportunities and forging ahead with determination and courage to enable continued growth and success. We will continue to innovate, to collaborate, and to lead with purpose, always guided by our vision of a brighter tomorrow.

Thank you to all of our supportive partners and to the people and communities who engage in our projects.

[Click here to learn more about us](#)

Key statistics of 2023/24

718 positive activities delivered

1,288 hours of engagement delivered

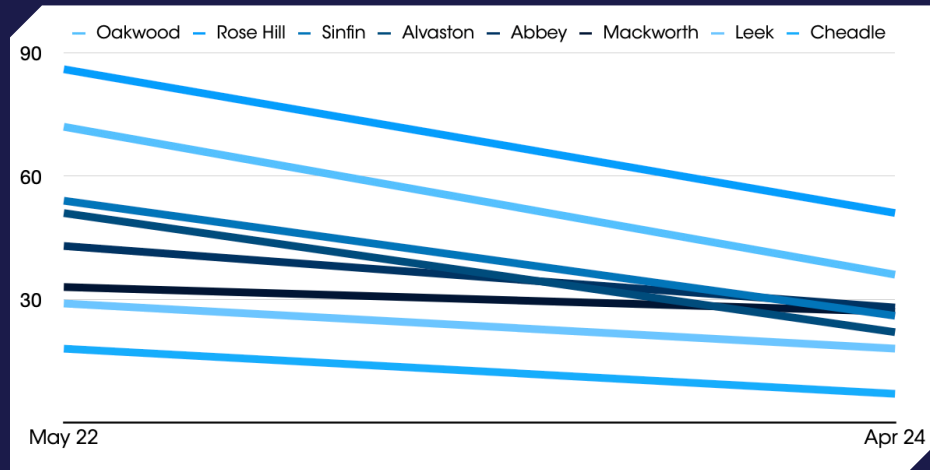
2,837 different people engaged on projects

21,919 throughput of engagement

£3.6 million total invested into community services

Community engagement

Community services remain a core service at Sporting Communities. Delivering services to meet local needs, building relationships with local people and providing wrap-around services to support their individual and collective needs.



Our community engagement work has primarily focussed around engaging underserved young people in street based settings.

Working with vulnerable young people at risk of exploitation, or involved in crime and anti-social behaviour we provide safe spaces and socially develop young people so that they demonstrate pro-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour has fallen by an average of 44% in the areas that we have delivered projects for 2 years.

In addition, we have also delivered projects that broaden young people's horizons, such as through the heritage focussed Atherstone 'Hatting' project. Using the communities hat making heritage to build confidence and connectivity, then develop skills around creative arts, event planning and digital media.

[Click here to learn more](#)





Youth Voice

January 2023 saw the birth of the UK's first Youth Innovation Conference.

Hosted at University Academy 92 and supported by Kitlocker, this event put the power of young people on the map.

The conference, which hosted 250 people, was designed, delivered and evaluated by young people.

Young people and decision makers from all over the UK came together to explore best practices, examine how young people could more effectively be included in decision-making processes and how strategies, policies and project could be effectively co-designed.

[Click here to learn more](#)

“ THE COLLECTIVE PASSION AND ENTHUSIASM TO SIMPLY IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE WAS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT EVERY FACET OF THE EVENT ”

Youth Voice is threaded through all our work, whether it be from conversations during activity sessions, or more formalised youth groups. Over the last year, we have significantly increased the number of and variety of opportunities for young people to share their thoughts, feelings and opinions in a meaningful way.



“ I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT I GOT THE CHANCE TO SPEAK AT A NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN FRONT OF PEOPLE THAT HAVE BEEN EXPERTS FOR SO LONG, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, THAT THEY WANTED TO HEAR WHAT I HAD TO SAY. ”
(F, AGED 16)

Young people have not only represented our organisation at the Youth Innovation Conference, but through contributing to the Children and Young People's Network Blog, attending meetings to speak with national partners and becoming members of our assets steering group to ensure that the facilities continue to serve young people in the surrounding area.

Youth
Voice
Groups

4

Youth Social Action
Projects delivered

14

Young people speaking at the
Youth Innovation Conference

22

Workforce Development



Sporting Communities has significantly impacted workforce development and diversity in the sport and youth work industry through targeted initiatives and inclusive practices. By providing specialised training and professional development programs, we have equipped individuals with the necessary training and experience to feel confident in delivering high quality services, fostering a more skilled workforce.

Moreover, Sporting Communities has actively championed workforce diversity by both creating opportunities for underrepresented groups and sharing effective means of recruiting and retaining ethnically and gender underrepresented workers.

Partnering with Sport England through their Workforce Diversity strategy, CIMSPA via their Community Sport Workforce Professional Development Board and Local Skills Accountability Boards in Derby and Cheshire and UK Coaching through their Coaching Advisory Panel has enabled us to expand the reach of learning so that they can be included in national strategies. This ensures that the top-down advice and strategic direction aligns with local need.

Our evidence based learning and resources around inclusive recruitment strategies and mentorship programs have focussed on ethnic minorities, individuals with a disability and those with socio-economically deprived backgrounds.

Sporting Communities is committed to continuing to build a more robust, inclusive, and effective workforce, ultimately driving positive social change in the sport and youth work industries.

Sporting Communities has an incredible workforce of passionate, driven, empathic individuals, who collectively make our fantastic team.

Below is a breakdown of our 41 workers as they identified.



100%
of our workers accessed internal Professional Development, or external training.

“ I started my journey on one of Sporting Communities' training programmes and now I Coach in various communities, inspiring all sorts of young people and I love it! ”

Facilities

Since asset transferring the facilities at Normanton Park, Derby, we have worked tirelessly on consulting with the community and identifying sources of funding to renovate the community's much needed assets.

During 2023/24 this has included the installation of a community garden to the rear of Normanton Park Community Centre, a Cruyff Court and the UK's first Football Foundation PlayZone. With investment from Cruyff Foundation, Derby Homes, Football Foundation, Premier League, the FA, Sport England, government and Sporting Communities, these facilities have transformed the community centre and wider park.

A steering group has since been established, comprising of local residents, local partners and facility users to ensure that these community assets continue to serve the community.

Click on the
images to learn more





In addition to the assets, thanks to support from Lubrizol and the Premier League we have also installed 2 Defibrillators on the park so ensure that park users have access to immediate support in the case of a cardiac emergency.

Our site has also housed the charity Supporting Communities, who provide family support, mental health support and poverty relief to individuals and families when they need it. Having the charity on site has enable vulnerable users of the facilities to engage in much needed support.

Research

At Sporting Communities, we truly believe in the importance of aligning theory and practice, which is why we work closely with academic partners to promote learning, best practices and innovative developments. Below are some of the articles, blogs and presentations that our team have been involved in, including abstracts and experience contributions in journals.

<p>Contextual Safeguarding 2024</p> <p>The Next Chapter</p>  <p>Building Safety: Co-designing safety and fairness into the 'missing' response for young people in care who</p>	<p>CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING RESEARCH PROGRAMME</p> <p>Building Safety: Co-designing safety and fairness Through the programme's Research Advisory Board</p>	<p>CYPNOW BLOG ON BEST PRACTICE</p> <p>Participation in Action by Sporting Communities' Strategic Director and Youth Champion</p>	<p>Participation in Action: Youth-led conference empowers young people to think big for a better future</p> <p>Friday, March 8, 2024</p> <p>Young people have empowered young people to host a conference about rethinking social policy to create a society that better meets their needs.</p>  <p>The Youth Innovation Conference</p> <p>Organisation: Sporting Communities</p> <p>The Youth Innovation Conference, held at Manchester's University Community 10, provided an excellent platform to foster meaningful conversations between adults who hold power and the younger generation. Influencers and innovators were invited to an intergenerational gathering to share insights on their experiences and the impact they want to see in their communities. Speakers included Mike Stone, the Founder of Kickstart, Matt Lewis, Chief Executive of StreetGames, and various members from Manchester 10 and Sporting Communities.</p> <p>The event, organised and led by young people, served as a vibrant platform where ideas were shared, and valuable connections could be forged.</p> <p>The conference featured a series of workshops tailored to various youth-led groups. These workshops explored the</p>
<p>Better Evidencing the Impact of Sport for Development – an Ethnographic Case Study of the Youth Engagement Service (YES) Programme</p> <p>(Hathaway, 2023)</p>	<p>PUBLISHED A PHD PAPER</p> <p>Better Evidencing the Impact of Sport for Development – an Ethnographic Case Study of the Youth Engagement Service (YES) Programme</p>	<p>DURHAM UNIVERSITY BLOG</p> <p>Resilient Communities by Sporting Communities' Strategic Director</p>	<p>Resilient Communities</p>  <p>How does Durham have been working on community development in the voluntary sector since the 1980s, followed by local authority efforts to create a more inclusive and resilient community? This is the focus of a new ethnographic case study by Dr. Beth Hathaway, published in the Journal of Community Development. The study explores the role of the Youth Engagement Service (YES) Programme in building resilient communities through sport and physical activity.</p> <p>Research Board Approach: although often thought of as contemporary, Park is an established in the past. Such approaches have been central to many things by different professional services, across many different neighbourhoods. However, the approach has often been used to serve the average citizen. But that is not necessarily the history of Sporting Communities CC which originated from the emergence of a City of Culture Hub in 2012. The project was born as a result of a desperate need for services to support the local community who were impacted by systemic poverty and neglect. The resulting focus on community-led initiatives was a direct result of local authority funding cuts and the need for a more inclusive and resilient community.</p> <p>Local authority-led initiatives have been central to many things by different professional services, across many different neighbourhoods. However, the approach has often been used to serve the average citizen. But that is not necessarily the history of Sporting Communities CC which originated from the emergence of a City of Culture Hub in 2012. The project was born as a result of a desperate need for services to support the local community who were impacted by systemic poverty and neglect. The resulting focus on community-led initiatives was a direct result of local authority funding cuts and the need for a more inclusive and resilient community.</p> <p>How does Durham have been working on community development in the voluntary sector since the 1980s, followed by local authority efforts to create a more inclusive and resilient community? This is the focus of a new ethnographic case study by Dr. Beth Hathaway, published in the Journal of Community Development. The study explores the role of the Youth Engagement Service (YES) Programme in building resilient communities through sport and physical activity.</p> 

In addition, Sporting Communities has:

- Provided a Regional Researcher to Support UK Youth's Data Ecosystem Project
- Presented at Loughborough University, University Academy 92 and The British Educational Research Association Conference
- Had our work referenced in 'Re-imagining Playwork Through a Poststructural Lens: Stories from the Climbing Frame'

Environmental Impact

We are deeply committed to environmental sustainability. We reduce our carbon footprint through energy-efficient practices; waste reduction, recycling and by sourcing materials responsibly. We also undergo regular environmental practices such as litter picking and creating spaces that are suitable for wildlife. We actively encourage our workers and volunteers to adopt eco-friendly habits. Through these efforts, we strive to create a positive, lasting impact on the planet for future generations.



Over the last year, we have increased our efforts when purchasing environmentally friendly equipment and resources.

Our newly built assets sourced materials that were eco-friendly and we commissioned partners committed to working towards being carbon neutral.



In addition to our continued recycling, we have picked up 232 bags of litter around Derby City, ensuring that the park's and streets remain clean and safe for residents.

This has included youth-led social action initiatives, whereby young people have instigated the desire to keep their community clean and tidy.



Our Environmental Officer conducted 30 home assessments with residents to help them improve their environmental commitment and save money in the process.

This involved assessing current energy usage, making recommendations based on saving calculations and advising on how to support local wildlife.

Case Study - Person

As a young person completing an undergraduate degree in Sports Management at Loughborough University, Charlie approached us seeking a year-long placement that would offer a holistic and pragmatic experience to compliment his studies in his chosen field. Charlie began working within our Sustaining Communities team to assist in developing the new business partnership network, bringing his range of experiences in Sports Management to offer application writing, networking opportunities and marketing support. Utilising distinct pragmatism and pro-activity, Charlie quickly settled into his new role by embedding into the team to enhance his learning of the new role and the complexities of the sport and community development industries.

Throughout his time at Sporting Communities, Charlie used his initiative to enhance the social media presence of the organisation whereby he connected with a range of organisations both in need of further support and those aiming to work in collaboration with like-minded individuals, groups and agencies to work together a common aim. This also included streamlining our social media posts and connections to ensure the work of the organisation was promoted in the most appropriate, effective and efficient ways possible.

The culmination of Charlie's work was his involvement in the Youth Innovation Conference where he helped to spearhead the promotion of and develop an awareness of our event's intentions to organisations looking to support young people most in need. Charlie assisted in contacting attendees, producing social media posts for the conference and forging partnerships with the event speakers; adopting his skillsets in event and business management to ensure a smooth operation and experience for all attending.

Charlie has since been able to take this industry experience into his education and career prospects. His experience has also led him to being a member of CIMSPA's Community Sport Professional Workforce standards Board.



Case Study - Place

Offering effective solutions to community need is a key priority for Sporting Communities, and during 2023/24, one such community was Oakwood, where our team delivered much needed and youth-based football at Springwood Leisure Centre.

With the aim of preventing anti-social behaviour, improving connectivity and enhancing wellbeing, our open-access programme ran two groups, one for younger children and another for teenagers.

Funded by the Oakwood Neighbourhood Board and National Lottery Community Fund, the project kick started by introducing young people to the basics of football; delivering fun and adapted skill-based games to help young people to easily integrate into the sessions, creating a safe space. Through building social cohesion, we have witnessed more and more young people making new friends and becoming active in a fun and welcoming environment. Throughout the course of 2023/24, over 60 young people engaged in these sessions, which in turn has alleviated the pressures associated with growing concerns of youth-orientated anti-social behaviour in the local area.

In addition, we provided bespoke support for young people attending to address their personal concerns and challenges. This has included providing mental health support, training and social action opportunities. Our detached outreach also provided positive reassurance within the area, alleviating issues arising within the immediate surrounding areas.

We have witnessed a significant increase in empathy amongst young people towards their local community, enhanced social skills and monthly anti-social behaviour has reduced by 50%. Overall, our work in Oakwood has been a shining beacon to how a combination of sport, positive engagement and effective outreach can bring significant outcomes for young people, residents and community services.



Thank you

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our partners who help to enable Sporting Communities to undertake our work and work collaboratively with us in order to ensure that young people and communities receive the support that they need.

I would especially like to thank all our funders, who help to ensure that our work can continue, however I would like to give a special thank you to the National Community Lottery Fund, Children in Need, Derbyshire PCC and Staffordshire Community Foundation and capital funders Football Foundation who have provided the majority of our investment during the 2023/24 year.

In addition, I would like to thank the unbelievable staff and volunteers who continue to astound me with their dedication, empathy and willingness to go the extra mile in order to provide high quality services to those who need it the most.

Lastly, I would like to thank the people who attend our programmes for continuing to inspire our team and co-designing our services. ”

Ross Podyma - Strategic Director



Future Plans

For the 2024/25 year, Sporting Communities' priorities are to:

- Continue to work with local and national partners to ensure collaborative, joint working based on data and identified need.
- Continuing to provide youth-focussed community development services in deprived communities where investment is low and wider social challenges prevail.
- Developing meaningful workforces, developing suitable training, sharing learning and best practices and mentoring organisations to adopt low-resource, effective methods for recruiting and retaining a workforce that is diverse and inclusive.
- Further establishment of youth voice groups to create positive, recognised pathways for young people, whereby strategic leads can enter conversations with young people to shape their decision-making processes.
- The development of community assets, building on the existing facilities and sourcing funds to continue developing much needed safe spaces that meet local people's needs.



“OUR COMMITMENT TO LISTENING TO COMMUNITIES AND PROVIDING ETHICAL, HIGH QUALITY SERVICES REMAINS AT THE FOREFRONT OF OUR WORK.”

Kevin Sauntry - CEO



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