



LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
CARNEGIE SCHOOL OF SPORT



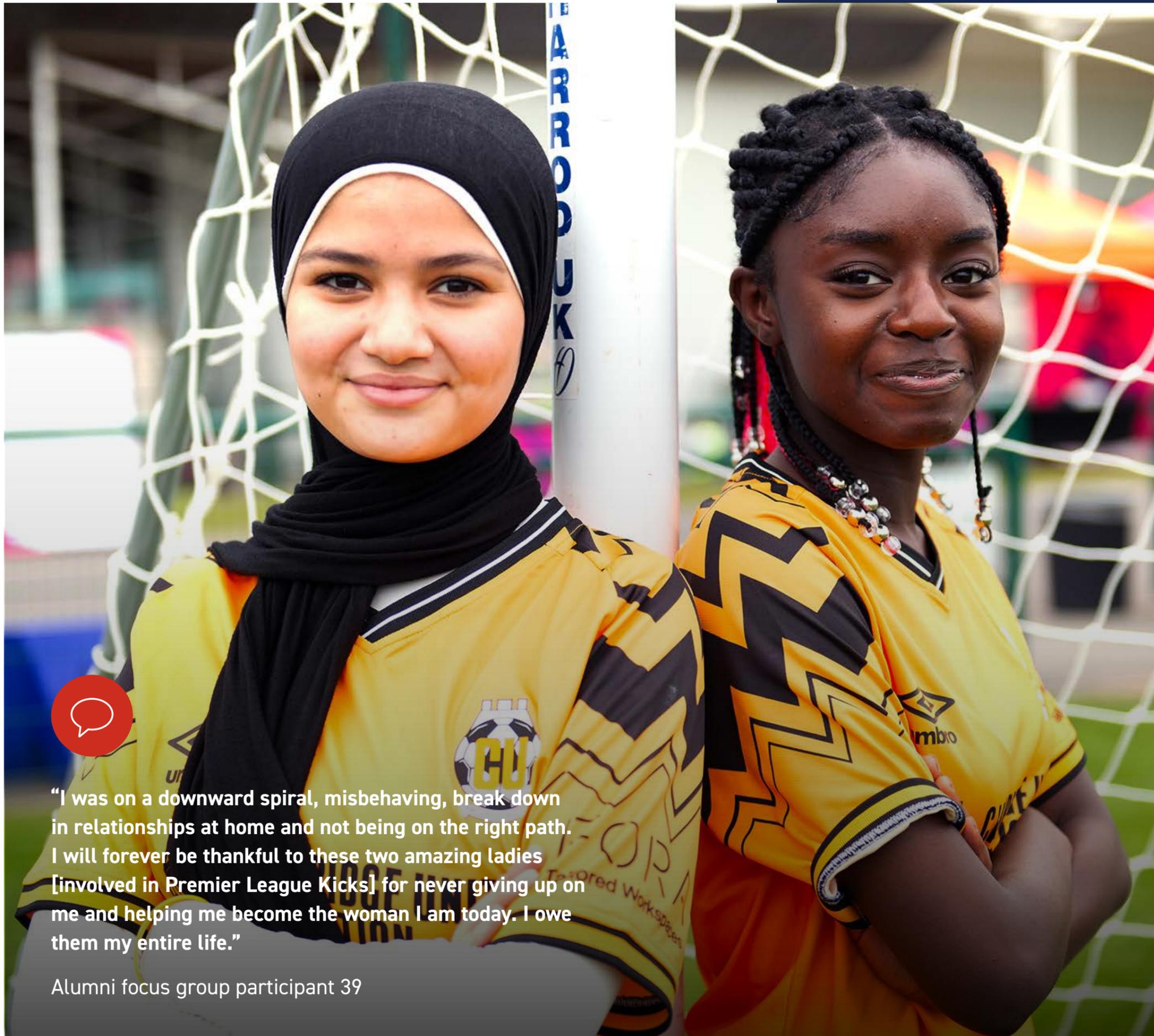
Premier League
Kicks

PREMIER LEAGUE KICKS EVALUATION REPORT

Evaluating the long-term impact of Premier League Kicks on participants and communities

Research conducted: October 2024 to August 2025





“I was on a downward spiral, misbehaving, break down in relationships at home and not being on the right path. I will forever be thankful to these two amazing ladies [involved in Premier League Kicks] for never giving up on me and helping me become the woman I am today. I owe them my entire life.”

Alumni focus group participant 39

FOREWORD

Over the past two decades, a range of interconnected social challenges have made the role of Premier League Kicks more vital than ever. Serious youth violence and knife crime have become major concerns across England and Wales. Anxiety, depression, and loneliness among young people have risen significantly – especially in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis continues to affect low income families disproportionately and increasing numbers of young people are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) placing them at greater risk of long-term disadvantage. At the same time, many community support services have been reduced or closed, leaving fewer safe, inclusive spaces for young people to access after school or on weekends.

It is against this backdrop that a research team from the Carnegie School of Sport at Leeds Beckett University was commissioned to conduct a robust, independent evaluation of the long-term impact of the Premier League Kicks programme.

Our report reveals that Premier League Kicks offers more than just football. It provides structure, purpose, and positive relationships. It helps rebuild trust between young people, their communities, and wider social institutions, and it offers opportunities – and hope – where they are most needed.

Dr Thomas Quarmby
Reader, Carnegie School of Sport,
Leeds Beckett University



LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
CARNEGIE SCHOOL OF SPORT

WHAT IS PREMIER LEAGUE KICKS?

Premier League Kicks has supported **more than half a million young people** through free weekly football and educational workshops.

Now in its 20th year of delivery, the programme uses the power of football and sport to inspire participants to fulfil their potential.

In addition to providing young people in under-served communities with access to free football and sports activities, Premier League Kicks has also inspired thousands with routes into education, training and employment.

Established as a partnership between the Premier League and the Metropolitan Police, the programme has spent two decades helping to create safer, more inclusive communities. Since its launch, there have been **more than 17 million attendances** across **more than 5,000 venues**.

Today, **93 professional football club charities** run the programme, with more than 750 staff employed through it.

Over 300 members of the current workforce are former participants themselves. Alumni of Premier League Kicks include high profile players such as Marcus Rashford, Raheem Sterling, Declan Rice and Lauren Hemp.

The Premier League has invested **more than £95 million** into the programme through the Premier League Foundation, with a **further £30 million committed** over the next three years, up to 2028.

In 2024, Leeds Beckett University was commissioned by the Premier League Foundation, the charitable arm of the Premier League, to assess the long term impact of Premier League Kicks and to understand how those outcomes influence local communities.

This report presents the findings from research conducted by the Centre for Social Justice in Sport and Society at the Carnegie School of Sport between October 2024 and August 2025.

WHY IS PREMIER LEAGUE KICKS NEEDED?

Premier League Kicks creates opportunities for children and young people aged eight-to-18 in some of the most under-served communities across England and Wales. The programme operates within a wider social environment characterised by increasing pressures on young people and diminishing local support infrastructure.



Young people in England and Wales are navigating a complex set of challenges, including mental health concerns, heightened exposure to violence and crime, barriers to employment, and risks associated with the online world. Crime and safety remain particular concerns. In 2024, **20 per cent of 13 to 17 year olds reported to be victims of violent crime**. In this context, the Government's Safer Streets mission sets out an ambition to reduce serious harm, strengthen confidence in policing, and halve both knife crime and violence against women and girls (VAWG) over the next decade. Delivery of these aims relies heavily on community led approaches, targeted local action to reduce anti-social behaviour, and investment in early intervention, diversion and youth support.

At the same time, the Government's **Youth Strategy** acknowledges long term underfunding of youth provision. **YMCA (2026) reports** that local authority spending on youth services in England has fallen by 76 per cent in real terms since 2010/11, equivalent to a £1.3 billion reduction.

In Wales, spending has declined by 29 per cent over the same period. Infrastructure has also contracted, with the number of local authority-run youth centres in England falling from 429 to 379 in the last financial year, a further 12 per cent reduction. These cuts have left many areas without sufficient safe, structured spaces for young people.

These pressures coincide with rising need. The **Youth Endowment Fund (2025)** reports a nine per cent increase in young people aged 10-to-17 being convicted or cautioned for violent offences between 2022/23 and 2023/24. In addition, 4.5 million children (30% of all UK children) were living in poverty in 2024.

Premier League Kicks staff and partners report directly on these growing challenges. Many participants face mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression, and live in communities affected by postcode wars, organised crime and gang activity. Food, clothing and equipment poverty are frequently evident in the areas where the programme operates. Young people consulted for this research also expressed negative perceptions of key institutions including police, schools and broader youth services.

Against this backdrop, Premier League Kicks provides a stable community offer. Delivery by football club charities enables sustained engagement with young people who may not access or trust alternative services. While the programme's overarching aims are consistent nationally, each club charity adapts delivery to local circumstances, responding directly to community needs, priorities and risks.

This adaptability, combined with long term investment and reach, positions Premier League Kicks as a critical partner in supporting national policy goals relating to early intervention, youth safety, community cohesion and the reduction of serious violence.



KEY FINDINGS: IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

The goal of Premier League Kicks is to connect young people with football to reach their potential. As such, it aims to affect a series of changes to young people's lives.

The long-term impact of Premier League Kicks recorded by the research team from the Carnegie School of Sport can be seen in three key areas that are mapped to The Young Foundation – A framework of outcomes for young people.

- i. individual behaviours and actions
- ii. social, emotional and cognitive capabilities, and
- iii. interpersonal relationships.

In relation to individual behaviours and actions, the long-term impact can be seen in increased health and fitness and mental wellbeing, sustained participation in sport and physical activity, reduced anti-social behaviour, enhanced career outcomes, and enhanced learning and education outcomes.

In fact, 93 per cent of those surveyed felt Premier League Kicks kept them out of trouble, while 86 per cent said the programme improved career opportunities.

The qualitative data also revealed that Premier League Kicks impacted on participants' social, emotional and cognitive capabilities, including their confidence, social skills (e.g., teamwork, leadership, communication), and resilience. It also helped enhance their positive aspirations and outlook on life as well as developing their cultural awareness/understanding of difference. Survey data highlighted that 94 per cent reported improved teamwork skills, 91 per cent stated they developed better problem-solving skills, and 85 per cent suggested they increased their confidence speaking in front of groups.

Finally, key outcomes were evidenced for interpersonal relationships including enhanced perceptions of social institutions, increased social capital, and the development of a sense of belonging to Premier League Kicks and the wider community. This was also reflected in enhanced community cohesion and increased volunteering. In addition, 94 per cent felt encouraged to be a positive role model, while 88 per cent said Premier League Kicks inspired community volunteering. These are key pro-social behaviours, which help to further contribute to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.



Adapted from *The Young Foundation – A framework of outcomes for young people (2012)*



“If we didn’t have Kicks, God knows what would have happened. It was a life-saver, it was definitely something to deter you away from that other side.”

Alumni survey response 104



IMPACT OF PREMIER LEAGUE KICKS



KEY FINDINGS: IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE CAPABILITIES

A central feature of Premier League Kicks is how the programme develops **cultural awareness and an understanding of difference** among participants.



94%

believe that they now **get along better with people from different backgrounds** as a direct result of participating in Premier League Kicks

“Premier League Kicks gave you the chance to meet new people, learn about cultures and behaviours whilst playing football.”

Alumni survey response 150

“There’s so many people from so many different cultures. So, when you come to these sessions, you meet people that you might have not met outside. You learn about their culture, how they do things in their way, you might go to their house, meet their family and just learn about other people’s cultures and how they do things.”

Alumni focus group participant 50

“It introduced me to others around my area and revealed to me how similar we are in terms of socioeconomic background, and we have so much in common and that we should look out for each other and be friendly to one another.”

Alumni survey response 22



94% of alumni strongly agreed or agreed that Premier League Kicks helped them to **feel more confident** working in a team

94% reported improved **teamwork skills**

91% stated they developed better **problem-solving skills**

85% felt more comfortable speaking in front of a group

91% reported that they now **get along better with adults**

“It’s definitely taught me how to deal with rejection from opportunities presented to me that don’t end up working out.”

Alumni survey response 18

“It had a massive impact and helped me become who I am today, it gave me a lot of self confidence and allowed me to develop myself not only physically but mentally and socially.”

Alumni survey response 162

KEY FINDINGS: IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS' INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Premier League Kicks has helped to enhance community cohesion and supported participants to **develop a sense of belonging**.



94%

strongly agreed or agreed that Premier League Kicks played an important role in improving their **ability to develop and maintain relationships**

94%

felt encouraged to be a **positive role model**

88%

said Premier League Kicks inspired **community volunteering**

“...the people it really impacted and who were really locked into Kicks... they went out and started making even more impact within the community, people working in schools, you’ve got people working in communities... it’s a ripple effect.”
Alumni focus group participant 12

“You feel like you’re a part of something, like you’re part of like a little family and you feel like you can just be yourself here as well... as soon as you come through their doors... you can just be yourself.”
Alumni focus group participant 34



A key finding from the independent research team relates to how Premier League Kicks has changed participants' **perceptions of social institutions** and particularly **authority figures** like the police.

“...you come to Kicks and you’ve got the coaches holding you up like, ‘why are you like that?’ And you’re listening to the coaches and you’re like ‘oh that’s an authoritative figure’. Then all of a sudden you start listening to your teachers who are also doing the same thing at school. Then by magic you realise that every adult who has a stamp on your life is doing it for the right reasons.”
Alumni focus group participant 13

“Every single interaction I had with the police was a negative, until I went to Old Trafford and I seen this bobby go in goal for us... Genuinely, meeting him there in that session and seeing the human behind the uniform was really important. It changed my perception of the police.”
Alumni focus group participant 81

95%

strongly agreed or agreed Premier League Kicks played an important role in helping them to have positive attitudes towards and about others

91%

believe they learned more about the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour

89%

believe Premier League Kicks helped change their attitude to engaging in crime and anti-social behaviour



94%

strongly agreed or agreed Premier League Kicks played an important role in their ability to get along better with people from different backgrounds

KEY FINDINGS: IMPACT ON COACHES AND STAFF

The impact of Premier League Kicks extends beyond participants, to the coaches and staff involved. Seven-hundred-and-fifty people in the club charity workforce are currently employed through Premier League Kicks, and more than 300 are former participants of the programme. Staff reported high job satisfaction, pride and a sense of purpose – at times, citing personal transformation through the role. They also reported the development of professional skills and networks.

Premier League Kicks staff reported

a sense of pride and satisfaction that they are making a difference



a sense of belonging



engagement with professional development opportunities



94%

of alumni surveyed believe their involvement in Premier League Kicks provided them with positive role models



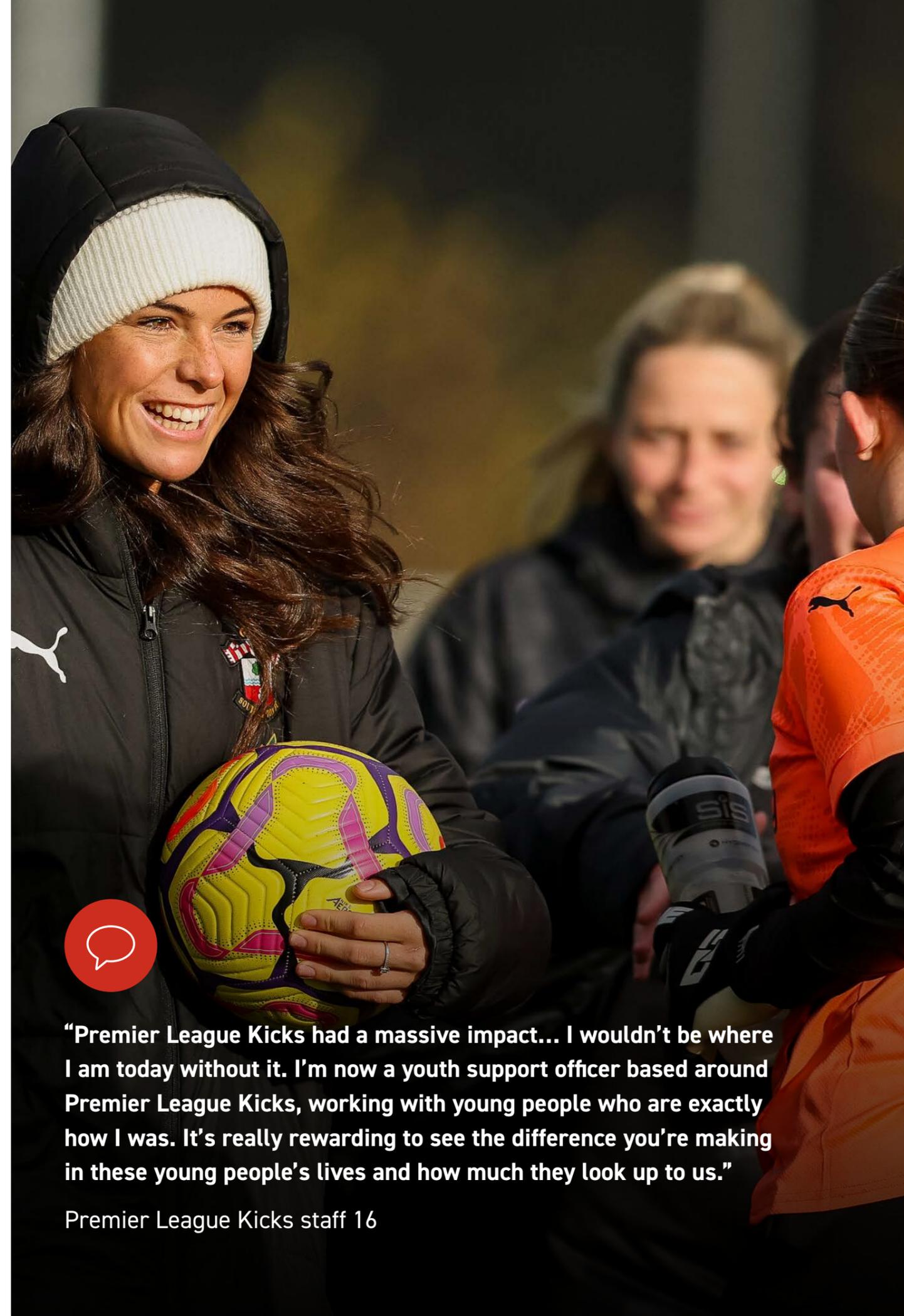
“There’s a sense of belonging to the young people, to the club, to the wider community and I think they really value what we, what all the coaches that are part of Premier League Kicks, do.”

Premier League Kicks staff 11



“Premier League Kicks had a massive impact... I wouldn’t be where I am today without it. I’m now a youth support officer based around Premier League Kicks, working with young people who are exactly how I was. It’s really rewarding to see the difference you’re making in these young people’s lives and how much they look up to us.”

Premier League Kicks staff 16



KEY FINDINGS: IMPACT ON PLACES AND COMMUNITIES

Qualitative data evidences that the outcomes for alumni all fed into a reduction in anti-social behaviour (ASB) within the community, with reports from staff indicating that local police data showed declines in ASB during and after Premier League Kicks sessions.

It was also evident that the longevity of the programme had led to the regeneration of spaces and that local partnerships developed through the programme led to effective collaborations within the local community that enhanced the responsiveness to community needs.

Importantly, Premier League Kicks was found to fill a service gap, often acting as a replacement or supplement to youth clubs lost due to broader community and government funding cuts.



“I think the partnerships that have been established and the fact that Premier League Kicks has been funded for so long, everyone knows it’s going to be there, that’s allowed us and others to work on particular areas and as a result in some cases regenerate some areas.”

Community partner 12



Established partnerships to address local needs

“...we have meetings where we’ve got partners from all different areas... people who work in different areas. It’s really useful to be able to have the input from other people and see what their experiences are with the young people, what engagement they’ve had with young people. So having those relationships with different partners is really useful because you’re getting ahead of the game.”

Community partner 7



Replacement of youth services or clubs

“It filled the community youth centre gap that was missing in my time growing up.”

Alumni survey response 46

“A lot of youth clubs were being shut down in every area. So, this is basically like a youth club, but I felt it took that a step further because they watched you all the way. So, you might be going to a youth club until a certain age, but here it’s like you can be yourself, but they’re gonna help you try and improve and be a better person and they’ll give you different opportunities.”

Alumni focus group participant 8

WHY PREMIER LEAGUE KICKS WORKS

The fun, free, local and consistent delivery of Premier League Kicks in communities across England and Wales creates positive pathways for participants.

Premier League Kicks delivery staff within football club charities act as positive role models within the local community. Many have shared lived experience with participants. They demonstrate care and compassion, offering guidance and support to build relationships with participants, often exposing them to difference and creating physically and psychologically safe spaces.

Premier League Kicks also has a profound impact on local communities, acting as a catalyst for club charities to establish partnerships with local organisations and improve community cohesion.

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) captured the mechanisms and wider intended and unintended impacts of Premier League Kicks. The outputs of the REM workshops are summarised in the table below.

	Local context	Organisational context	The offer	Outcomes
Young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health challenges Gangs (post-code wars) Child sexual exploitation Radicalisation Grooming Poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food/drink Clothing Equipment Lack of community services Negative perception of social structures Police Schools Youth services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint coaches with similar lived experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatable (from the same area) Demonstrate care and compassion Offer guidance and support Coaches act as positive role models and mentors Build relationships and exposure to 'difference' Safe space (physically and psychologically) Partnerships with local organisations and social structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doorstep / local and free (accessible) Consistency of (structured) delivery Football and multisports Incentives (awards, trips, tournaments) Volunteering opportunities Opportunities for coaching badges Pathways to employment Signposting to services Educational workshops Youth voice forum Fun 	<p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased health and fitness Improved mental wellbeing Sustained participation Reduced anti-social behaviour Enhanced career outcomes Enhanced learning and education outcomes Confidence Social skills Resilience Increased positive aspirations Cultural awareness Enhanced perceptions of social institutions Increased social capital Sense of belonging Enhanced community cohesion Increased volunteering <p>Staff/coaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of pride and satisfaction Sense of belonging Professional development <p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in anti-social behaviour Improved community cohesion Regeneration opportunities Established partnerships Replacing youth services



“The coaches were great. They knew the background we were coming from because it seemed like they grew up similarly. It was the connection, almost like a bigger older brother or uncle. They challenged you and made it fun all whilst being fair.”

Alumni survey response 6



METHODOLOGY

The Centre for Social Justice in Sport and Society, within the Carnegie School of Sport at Leeds Beckett University, consists of a range of academics dedicated to identifying the root causes of injustices in sport with the purpose of driving social change.

Established in 2020, the Centre provides policy-relevant research that places sport (in all its forms) under the microscope to transform lives and communities, and challenges sport organisations to think and act differently towards issues of equity.

The research team from within the Centre consisted of [Dr Tom Quarmby](#), [Dr Annette Stride](#), [Dr Ian Cowburn](#), [Dr Nicky Clarke](#), [Dr Stefan Lawrence](#) and [Dr Jon Dart](#). The method adopted by the team for this research included:

Phase of research	Method(s)	Number of participants	Demographics (where applicable)
Phase 1	Survey to alumni that attended Premier League Kicks between 2006 – 2016 (distributed online and in hard copy)	177 alumni, aged 24-35 years	<p>Mean age = 27.8 years</p> <p>Men = 82%; Women = 17%</p> <p>59% White; 25% Black, Black British, Caribbean or African; 8% Asian or Asian British; 6% Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups</p> <p>84% reported no physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting 12 months or more</p>
Phase 2	Seven (7) online focus group interviews with staff from football club charities	20 staff from 18 club charities	Men = 80% (16); Women = 20% (4)
	Five (5) Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) workshops with club charity staff and community partners	39 participants (including 21 staff and 18 community partners)	Club charities include: 1 x North-West; 2 x Midlands; 1 x North-East; 1 x London
Phase 3	Face-to-face focus groups with alumni from five (5) different club charities	81 alumni, aged 24-35 years	<p>Mean age 27.7 years</p> <p>Men = 100%</p>

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) was used to understand the mechanisms that support or hinder the achievement of impacts from Premier League Kicks.

This brought together stakeholders (i.e., those who have been involved in, or affected by, the programme) to reflect on and visually map out what they have done and what the impacts have been.

Each phase informed the delivery of the next phase, with data from alumni used to triangulate responses from football club charity staff and community partners.



Football club charities delivering Premier League Kicks (season 2025/26)

- Accrington Stanley Community Trust
- AFC Bournemouth Community Sports Trust
- AFC Wimbledon Foundation
- Argyle Community Trust (Plymouth)
- Arsenal in the Community
- Aston Villa Foundation
- Barnsley FC Community Trust
- Birmingham City FC Foundation
- Blackburn Rovers Community Trust
- Blackpool FC Community Trust
- Bolton Wanderers in the Community
- Bradford City Community Foundation
- Brentford FC Community Sports Trust
- Brighton & Hove Albion Foundation
- Bristol City Robins Foundation
- Bristol Rovers Community Trust
- Burnley FC in the Community
- Burton Albion Community Trust
- Cambridge United Foundation
- Cardiff City FC Foundation
- Carlisle United Community Sports Trust
- Charlton Athletic Community Trust
- Chelsea FC Foundation
- Cheltenham Town Community Trust
- Chesterfield FC Community Trust
- City in the Community (Manchester City)
- Club Doncaster Foundation
- Colchester United Community Foundation
- Crawley Town Community Foundation
- Crewe Alexandra in the Community
- Derby County Community Trust
- Everton in the Community
- Exeter City Community Trust
- Fleetwood Town Community Trust
- Foundation of Light (Sunderland)
- Forest Green Rovers Community Trust
- Foundation 92 (Salford City)
- Fulham FC Foundation
- Grimsby Town Foundation
- Harrogate Town Community Foundation
- Huddersfield Town Foundation
- Ipswich Town Foundation
- Leeds United Foundation
- Leicester City in the Community
- Leyton Orient Trust
- LFC Foundation (Liverpool)
- Lincoln City Foundation
- Luton Town Community Trust
- Manchester United Foundation
- Mansfield Town Community Trust
- Middlesbrough FC Foundation
- Millwall Community Trust
- Milton Keynes Dons Community Trust
- Morecambe FC Community Foundation
- Newcastle United Foundation
- Newport County in the Community
- Northampton Town FC Community Trust
- Norwich City Community Sports Foundation
- Nottingham Forest Community Trust
- Notts County Foundation
- Oldham Athletic Community Trust
- Oxford United in the Community
- Peterborough United Foundation
- Palace for Life Foundation (Crystal Palace)
- Pompey in the Community (Portsmouth)
- Port Vale FC Foundation
- Preston North End Community and Education Trust
- QPR in the Community Trust
- Reading FC Community Trust
- Rochdale AFC Community Trust
- Rotherham United Community Trust
- Saints Foundation (Southampton)
- Sheffield United Community Foundation
- Sheffield Wednesday FC Community Programme
- Shrewsbury Town Foundation
- Sky Blues in the Community (Coventry)
- Southend United Community Foundation
- Stevenage FC Foundation
- Stockport County Community Trust
- Stoke City Foundation
- Swansea City AFC Foundation
- Swindon Town FC Community Foundation
- The Albion Foundation (West Bromwich Albion)
- Tigers Trust (Hull City)
- Tottenham Hotspur Foundation
- Tranmere Rovers in the Community
- Walsall FC Foundation
- Watford FC Community Sports and Education Trust
- West Ham United Foundation
- Wigan Athletic Community Trust
- Wolves Foundation
- Wrexham Foundation
- Wycombe Wanderers Foundation

To find out more about the work and impact of the professional club charities delivering Premier League Kicks, please visit www.premierleague.com/foundation/premier-league-kicks



LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
CARNEGIE SCHOOL OF SPORT



Evaluating the long-term impact of Premier League Kicks on participants and communities was commissioned by the Premier League Foundation in August 2024.

For further information, please email mailbox@premierleaguefoundation.com
or visit www.premierleague.com/foundation

The Premier League Foundation is a registered charity no: 1137208