Sports Partnership Herefordshire & Worcestershire’s Youth Engagement Project aims to use sports and physical activity as the catalyst to create a positive change in young people that are at risk of offending, or have already offended.

Locally, the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, John Campion, focuses on funding projects which aim to divert young people away from crime by involving them in preventative activities.

In 2016, Sports Partnership Herefordshire & Worcestershire (SPHW), alongside Energize Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin were successful in receiving £66,000 worth of funding from the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to engage young people who are involved, or at risk of becoming involved in offending, in sport or physical activity.

The initial 2 year funding, awarded by the PCC is aimed at engaging those aged 16-24 in sport/physical activity. Following this, SPHW and Energize were successful in securing a second instalment to extend our provision and engage those aged 13-15, creating new sporting/physical activity opportunities and in addition provide training opportunities to ensure coaches have the knowledge and ability to work with the young people identified.

Young people can be engaged either on an individual basis, or in small pre-existing groups, through active participation, volunteering within a sports-based setting, or by being given the opportunity to achieve sports related qualifications.

Using sport and physical activity as a positive diversionary activity is based on a belief that sport can build confidence within individuals whilst also helping to develop community links. A Sport England (2012) study found that sport programmes aimed at young people who are at risk of criminal behaviour can enhance self-esteem and reduce re-offending.

Communities where young people are predominantly inactive are shown to be the same communities that endure high levels of crime and antisocial behaviour (the crime most perpetrated by young people). They also tend to be the areas with the highest rates of poverty, low educational achievement and a lack of positive activities on offer (Street Games, 2017).

Department of Health research has shown that these young people are more likely to be inactive into adulthood, one of the main contributing factors to poorer health outcomes for these communities (Street Games, 2017). Although anti-social behaviour (ASB) has generally been on the decline across Herefordshire & Worcestershire (2015-2016), identified risks to this decline have been acknowledged around cuts to youth services and limited capacity of Community Safety Partnerships.

There has been a need highlighted for more work around prevention and reduction in anti-social behaviour and further engagement with community partners to help achieve this.
Referrals

Within the initial funding cycle, a total of 178 referrals were received.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13-16 year olds</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Braley House Probation Hostel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-24 year olds</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Integrated Offender Manager Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25+ year olds</td>
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Referrals have been received from a wide variety of agencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Number</th>
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<td>National Probation Service</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>YSS - ARC</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>CAMHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Willowdene Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Connecting Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>YSS - Divert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Herefordshire &amp; Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stuart Brooks Social Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Social Services</td>
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<td>Droitwich Spa High School</td>
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<td>St. Paul's Hostel</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Babcock Intl</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Integrated Offender Manager Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>County Training - Hereford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Redditch United in the Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Engaged

Out of the referrals received, the following numbers engaged for at least 1 sporting/activity session, or 1 contact with our Youth Engagement Officer:

- **32** 13-16 year olds
- **94** 17-24 year olds
- **21** 25+ year olds

Sustained

Out of the young people who engaged, the following number sustained their activity for at least 6/6 or 6/12 weeks, or have undertaken a voluntary opportunity or a sports based qualification:

- **18** 13-16 year olds
- **37** 17-24 year olds
- **5** 25+ year olds
Working in partnership with Mettabox CrossFit Droitwich, and Worcestershire Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), the Healthier, Happier, Fitter, Stronger (HHFS) functional fitness course is now in its fourth cycle.

Young people who were in the ‘contemplation’ stage of the behaviour change model, told their offender managers that they wanted to take part in sport or physical activity, however didn’t currently feel fit or confident enough to do so. Thus HHFS was designed to engage the participants in functional, fitness based activities to address this need, whilst simultaneously increasing their individual development and promoting physical wellbeing. The project focuses on emphasising sustainable lifestyle changes to underpin their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and facilitate lasting transformation.

The 12-week course incorporated a physical and mental component that was tailored to the group’s needs. The physical element focused on all aspects of fitness, in particular how they could apply these principles to their daily routines without the need for expensive equipment, or gym memberships. Mentoring and support was provided to participants via SPHW’s Youth Engagement Officer, working closely with Mettabox coaching staff.

47 young people have now been referred from CRC to complete the programme, with 45% successfully completing the 12 week course - a significant statistic given the chaotic lifestyle of these young people. Participants reported poor engagement levels with CRC prior to HHFS, but the engagement rates with both the course, and the individual’s offender managers were shown to improve throughout the duration of the project.
Willowdene Farm

In partnership with Willowdene Farm, a 12 week multi-sport project was run at their facility in Bridgenorth to engage Worcestershire based service users in a variety of sports and physical activities. Sessions were developed around what sports service users wanted to try. Participants were signposted into activities in their local area if they expressed an interest in carrying on that sport after sessions at Willowdene had finished. 10 participants engaged in the project, with 5 meeting sustainability targets by successfully completing 6/12 of the sessions.

Braley House - HHFS

An adapted version of the HHFS course was run in Braley House probation hostel in Worcester. Consultation was completed with service users who identified that even those who were used to training when they were in custody experienced many barriers to continuing in sport or physical activity on release. Low confidence-levels, knowledge of the area and access to finances to be able to participate were all barriers to them continuing participation on release from custody. SPHW used Sport England funding to fund gym equipment for the hostel to be used by service users on their release from custody.

In conjunction with Mettabox gym, a version of the HHFS course was run twice a week for 6 weeks to teach service users how to train without the need for expensive gym equipment. The gym equipment has stayed with the hostel to continue to enable their service users to engage in physical activity on release from custody, providing structure to their routine and taking pressure off the hostel staff. Staff stated that they could see the equipment having a positive impact on service user’s mental health as they were able to use it for stress release, and as a positive coping strategy for their symptoms. Staff also reported that some residents have used the equipment as part of either injury or stroke rehabilitation, as advised by their physios.

CRC Football

In conjunction with CRC, a football project was set up as an exit route for participants who had completed the HHFS programme, or for CRC service users who did not wish to attend the gym course. The programme successfully engaged around 12 service users each week from February until September, using facilities at Worcester Community Trust.

Winyates/Matchborough/ Church Hill Football

In conjunction with West Mercia Police, a need was identified to create a positive diversionary activity in the Matchborough/Winyates area of Redditch on a Friday evening to target high levels of anti-social behaviour by young people. Working in partnership with Bromsgrove & Redditch Council, PAZ, and Redditch United a Friday night football session was set up in Arrow Vale School. Around 30 young people engaged every Friday night and the Police reported that anti-social behaviour has dropped as a result of the sessions. Due to the success of that project, a similar session was set up in partnership with the YMCA in the Church Hill area of Redditch, which now engages around 30-40 young people every Tuesday evening.

Young people have been encouraged to take ownership of their own projects and come up with fundraising ideas in order to make the projects more sustainable going forward. Redditch United have also used their commercial knowledge to bring in corporate sponsorship from local businesses in order to continue these sessions in the future.

Working alongside the police, young people who could benefit from additional support have been identified and referred to YSS’s Divert project, or SPHW’s Youth Engagement Project.
Individual Referrals

Individual referrals have been received from a variety of agencies including YSS (Arc & Divert) Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, Social Services and West Mercia Police. The role of sport within some of these young people’s lives has been a new method of using time, overcoming issues, and a chance to enjoy new environments.

These young people have been supported into a variety of sport/physical activity settings, including Worcester Dragon Boat Club, Warriors Homeless Rugby, pregnancy yoga and boxing. Young people who have met their sustained target, have then followed SPHW’s sustainable exit pathway and continued to use sport as a diversionary activity, or to support with their mental health. One young person started climbing for the first time, and now uses climbing as a method to overcome mental health issues and help his communication with others. Parent/guardians, support workers and others have also commented on the role that sport has played to support the relationship that they have with the young person.

Additionally, young people who have engaged with cohort based projects have then gone on to benefit from additional 1-2-1 support from our Youth Engagement Officer. One young person progressed through the HHFS programme, and was then supported to join Worcester Dragon Boat Racing Club, where he regularly trains and travels with the club to competitions.

Brookfield School

Brookfield is a specialist school based in Hereford. They currently have 84 students at the school, and each of them have social, emotional or mental health difficulties. The school itself belongs to the Hereford Integrated Behaviour Outreach Service Multi Academy Trust (HIBOS). Sporting provision at the school has been limited in the past. However, with the support of the Youth Engagement Project, a 7 week pilot project was implemented at the school. A group of 10 young people aged between the ages of 14-16 were identified by the school, and took part in sports including laser pistol shooting, archery, and fencing, all outside of normal school hours. The project incorporated local sports deliverers and gave the students a chance to experience a new physical activity that they’d not experienced before. Attendance across 6 weeks was 100%. As a result, students on the project are now taking part in club sessions external to the project, and teachers at the school have reported on a change of attitude within the small peer group that have attended.

Droitwich Spa High School HHFS

Droitwich Spa High School (DSHS) inclusion centre approached SPHW for support with a group of year 9 and 10 students who were on a reduced timetable, and at risk of becoming disengaged from education, employment or training (NEET). SPHW, in partnership with Mettabox CrossFit Droitwich set up a similar version of the HHFS CRC project to help to support these young people.

Prior to the project starting, students would finish school early, and leave the premises and were often then involved in ASB or putting themselves in risky situations. With this project in place, students now have a safe, positive environment to attend, where they can not only enjoy the time that they are there, but also to learn new skills, and improve their social ability. A member of staff at the school has noted ‘the pupils who attend are hugely motivated by the programme and we have certainly seen improvements in their overall attitude and approach.’ This is reflected in their attendance to both school, and the session provided.
Volunteering and Qualifications

Volunteering

4 young people have moved on to volunteering placements with the support of SPHW.
Of these, 4 have engaged in 3 different voluntary placements, including School Games, Workplace Challenge events and returning as support or mentors on the Healthier, Happier, Fitter, Stronger programme.

Qualifications

6 young people are currently working towards their Gym Instructor Level 2 qualifications. Another young person received qualifications in Emergency First Aid and Managing Challenging Behaviour. 2 young people have now completed their Level 1 FA Coaching qualification.
SPHW used the Shooting Star assessment tool to help measure outcomes around young people engaging in the Youth Engagement Project. The Shooting Star was designed for young people to capture holistic outcomes.

The Shooting Star captures results around six key areas:

**Aspiration**
“Interested in the things I am doing and determined to do well”

**Contribution**
“Involved in ways which help others”

**Confidence**
“Being my own person”

**Learning**
“Doing my best”

**People and Support**
“Getting support from those around me to be my best”

**Communicating**
“Getting my ideas across in lots of situations”

The Shooting Star’s scales have 5 points - a ‘big’ increase or decrease is defined as an average change of at least 0.5 points up or down across all scales. 95% of young people engaging with SPHW saw a ‘big’ increase across all areas, with the biggest changes being reported around aspiration, contribution and communication.
Other Outcomes

As well as increases in all areas of the Shooting Star assessment tool, other outcomes reported by participants include:

A reported reduction in alcohol, tobacco and illicit substance use.

One young man has now completely stopped smoking, both cannabis and tobacco, as a direct result of being more active as he identified the negative impact this was having on his ability to train effectively.

Young people reported decreased levels of anxiety and depression, stating they generally felt more positive and able to cope with day-to-day life.

One young person has reported that since starting exercising he has stopped hearing voices completely, resulting in him dramatically reducing his alcohol intake which he was previously using to block them out.

One young person has reported that since becoming more active he has completely stopped self-harming for the first time in 6 years. He reports that exercise has provided him with a more positive coping strategy that he is able to engage with and has also provided him with access to a more positive social network.

4 young people have reported that due to their increased confidence they have now progressed into full time employment or applied for college courses.

Young people are reporting regularly incorporating exercise into their daily routine at home and completing this before school/work.
What young people are saying

Matt, age 21
“... I'm hardly hearing any voices now, mentally I'm finding it easier to block them out. Physically I'm feeling much better in myself - I don't feel like I need to wear so many clothes to try and hide myself. I'm much more open about the way I am and basically I'm just starting to enjoy life again because I'm being active... it's definitely helped build my confidence, it's gone from down there right up in to the sky now. I'm coming back as a mentor and I want to help more people get better at being active and feeling good.”

Usman, age 22
“I found the course really interesting, challenging and fun. In the beginning I never imagined the course to be that good but all of the physical and nutritional information I gained has now improved my own workouts. I learnt so much and overall the course has been a huge opportunity for me. It has opened more doors. I will soon be doing a personal training course, which at the end of, I will be a fully qualified personal trainer which I never thought could happen, but thanks to the probation (CRC) team, Ruth (Sports Partnership Herefordshire and Worcestershire) and Mike (Mettabox), it's happening.”

Callum, age 20
“I found it really good - it got me motivated, got me fit and healthy, and got me more positive. I didn’t want to go out and do anything illegal - I got my skipping rope out instead to make me feel better”.

Phil, age 21
“... it has changed my mind from going out and getting into trouble again.”

Ben, age 19
“I have worked out at home since finishing, and want to carry on with training”
What partners are saying

**YSS**

YSS have worked alongside the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Sports Partnership over the past 18 months and developing a strong working relationship. The Sports Partnership is a forward thinking/solution focused organisation who have clear strategic aims and objectives. Together we have provided support to a number of young people achieving sustainable outcomes to those young people who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

**CAMHS**

We have been working in partnership with SPHW to help young people with mental health needs to engage in local activities. There is a growing evidence base which demonstrates the value of sport and exercise in the prevention and management of mental health needs. Many of the young people we work with in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are aware of this value, but may find it intimidating to join a regular sports group or club. As such, the groups which SPHW are pioneering locally are aimed at helping those young people who would like to try an activity but may not have had the confidence to try. Future work with SPHW is aiming to develop networks of clubs across the region who are able to safely engage young people with mental health needs. We are in the process of evidencing the outcomes of these groups, which will help us to develop an evidence base.

**Police Inspector [Redditch]**

As the Policing Inspector responsible for the Redditch area I have seen significant problems with high levels of ASB over the past 2 years, mainly emulating from those under 18 years of age. These are from the NEET and pre-NEET categories especially. Particularly these issues have been at the highest levels over the summer and autumn, especially around Halloween and bonfire night.

This year these figures have lowered dramatically when, and only when, diversionary activities have been in place. This has had a knock on effect on policing requirements and a reduction in the regular deployment of resources and the use of dispersal orders in respect of ASB legislation.

Since November 2017, with regular diversionary activities the problem has really dissipated – activities supported by SPHW have included football, dance, boxing and dodgeball.

Undoubtedly, these activities could not have commenced without the financial support of the Sports Partnership. Furthermore SPHW has provided high levels of advice, support and work to make these activities happen and be successful.

Moving forward we can continue to work with SPHW to develop further activities and an even broader spectrum – further targeting health and wellbeing, stepping stones to employability, and more enriched lives and therefore communities.
This intervention is extremely positive for our young male cohort and over the past few years we have been delighted with the positive outcomes that some of the participants have achieved. Last year I also had the pleasure of showing the project to Her Majesty in Prisons (HMIP) Inspection team who indicated that they thought the partnership working between the CRC, SPHW and Mettabox was an example of industry good practice. I am aware of at least three individuals who have participated in the project and then been sponsored by the Sports Partnership and proceeded to undergo a funded fitness trainer qualification which has led to them securing work.

Others participants have secured employment, reduced or stopped cannabis/substance use after completing the programme. Some participants have also gone on to engage in other sports related activities in their local communities.

Generally most of the participants, who have successfully complete the programme, describe a much healthy lifestyle/routine afterwards which helps them to plan and improve the structure of their day in terms of exercise they can do on their own via reference to their fitness hand-books.

One young woman in particular has herself recognised the benefits of the support and engagement she has received, helping her to lose weight and build her self-confidence and esteem through the activities. This young woman has a condition that affects her brain which means she is unable take many forms of medication. The activities have helped her, without the side effects of medication. Another young man has also reported feeling the benefits from the activities he has participated in helping him to channel his feelings and thoughts more positively. Many young people benefit from being active and physically doing something. It is well known that exercise helps to channel aggression and anger and is a great way to relieve stress. With so many options for young people being cut due to lack of funding. It was great when this programme came along.

We fully support the Youth Engagement Project and have already felt the benefits of collaborative work since the beginning of January. We have boys in both Year 9 and 10 who are being given targeted support to enable them to make positive choices and avoid unwanted behaviour both in school and the wider community. The boys are hugely motivated by the programme and we have certainly seen improvements in their overall attitude and approach. We would wholeheartedly welcome the opportunity to continue with the programme for as long as possible, both for the current boys and also for future planned referrals. We feel that anything positive that can have such an immediate impact on our students is something to be extended and embraced.
Costs

Through accessing additional funding streams, SPHW have contributed an additional £48,863 worth of funding to help support the Youth Engagement Project and other projects aimed at providing positive diversionary activities.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
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Workforce

This cohort of young people often experiences huge barriers to participation, including low-confidence, low self-esteem, mental health conditions, low motivation, and often being suspicious/un-trusting of new people.

SPHW acknowledge the importance of the right clubs and coaches to support young people who are involved, or at risk of offending. Following the Street Games Sport and Crime Offer Ideal Characteristics (Street Games, 2016), we know that staff and volunteers on these projects, are not just sports coaches, but mentors and role models whose relationships with these young people can act as catalysts for change.

Where possible, projects were developed in partnership with clubs/agencies who had experience and passion for making a positive change in these young people’s lives.

In a bid to make more accessible network of community clubs and projects for young people to attend across Herefordshire and Worcestershire, SPHW has supported 93 coaches from a variety of settings to attend either Youth Mental Health First Aid, Managing Challenging Behaviour training or a MultiSport Activator qualification enabling them to deliver safe, fun sessions to young people.

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