



Interim *Progress Report*

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SUMMARY

In February 2020, Levelling the Playing Field (LtPF) launched as a ground-breaking project that uses the power of sport and physical activity to engage and improve health and life outcomes for ethnically diverse children who are more likely to enter, or already involved with, the Criminal Justice System.

The Project now convenes nearly 100 partners to tackle two common goals, which are:

1. Increase the number of ethnically diverse children taking part in sport and physical activity
2. Prevent and divert ethnically diverse children from being involved with the Criminal Justice System

The Project is managed by the Alliance of Sport who work in partnership with the Youth Justice Board (YJB). It's supported by a £1m grant from the London Marathon Charitable Trust and is being externally evaluated by the University of Birmingham.



Photo by: Sport England

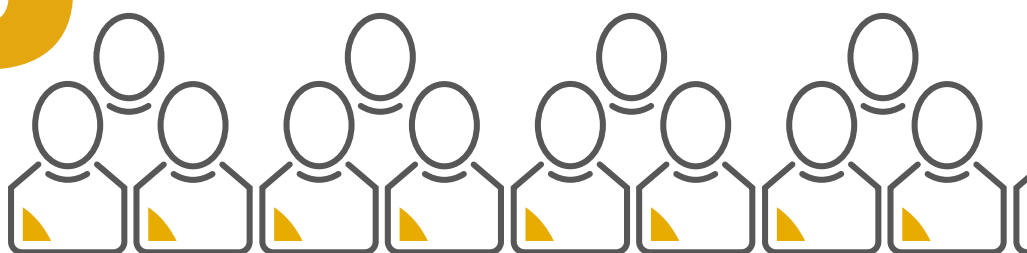
ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- **Working with nearly 100 organisations** including the YJB, Sport England, Sport Wales, Youth Justice Services, Police and Crime Commissioners, Violence Reduction Units, NHS England, Novus, Active Partnerships, and a wide range of third sector organisations etc
- **Quantitative data collected from over 1,500 children and young people** with over 5,400 attendances at LtPF sport sessions, more than 95% of which are from ethnic minorities
- **Focus groups and interviews with over 30 key stakeholders and 40 children and young people**, and questionnaire data from over 170 children and young people
- **National LtPF awards** and regional stakeholder events in South Yorkshire, West Midlands, London and Newport
- **Two talks at the 2022 Include Summit in Birmingham** and a round table at the 2022 Howard League conference at Oxford University
- **Mentions in YJB Business Plans** and regular notices in the YJB bulletin
- **Praised in reports** from the Ministry of Justice and UNICEF
- **576 attendances across** 20 different training courses

Working with nearly

100

organisations



RESPONSE TO PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on minority groups in terms of infection and mortality rates, and has widened the health and social inequalities experienced by these groups, particularly for children in the Youth Justice System. Cruelly, when these children were most in need of support, community sport partners were severely restricted in their ability to help.

In response to this, LtPF was in continual consultation with its delivery partners to establish their needs around effective support for children and young people during such unpredictable circumstances. The project recognised considerable risks to sustainability for its partners during this time; there remains an overwhelming sense of the pandemic's negative impact on staff's mental well-being, coupled with high staff turnovers causing elevated workloads, skills gaps and increased training needs.

One response to these needs is a Learning and Development Framework which offers a mix of training courses and free access to an expanse of materials aimed at developing a range of skills around supporting ethnically diverse children most effectively. The project also continues to respond to individual training needs from its partners, for example it has **distributed 27 grants totalling £157,152 to a number of partners from the Sport England Tackling Inequalities Fund and the Together Fund.**



EMERGING FINDINGS

Increase the number of ethnically diverse children taking part in sport and physical activity.

The lack of opportunity for children and young people to take part in sport and physical activity in the most deprived communities in England and Wales worsens health disparities, which are already substantially different between ethnic groups. LtPF delivery partners need help to ensure they can offer equal opportunities for sport and physical activity to children from all ethnicities in their communities. LtPF uses consistent messaging, thorough research, and advocacy, to provide indirect support for its network of specialist delivery partners, encouraging a more systemic approach to using sport to help tackle ethnic disparities in health outcomes for children in the UK. More directly, engagement in physical activity for young people has been allowed to continue through the 'Tackling Inequalities Fund' and 'Together Fund' money which the project has helped to secure.

Although Sport England and Sport Wales data indicates that there is underrepresentation by children from ethnic minorities in sport, this data cannot identify participation levels at a regional level and cannot break down these minority groups any further than "Black" "Asian" "White other" "Mixed" or "Other ethnicity". LtPF is unique in its endeavour to accrue and share data from third sector community sport partners supporting children from ethnic minorities. Currently, the project has accumulated data from over 1,500 individual young people across 20 delivery partners, **representing over 60 different categories for ethnicity.**

Monitoring data is a crucial way for delivery partners to demonstrate impact and secure additional funding. Whilst sharing this data is important it is vital that we report responsibly on ethnicity, and this has been at the forefront of LtPF's approach from the outset. The project continually consults with and listens to its network of stakeholders, this led to the cessation of the term "BAME", due to its aggregating nature which can lead to individual experiences and circumstances being undervalued and overlooked. Also, through facilitation of research with minority groups, LtPF is helping to develop an understanding of what ethnicity and nationality means to children from these groups, so we can understand how best to represent them and their experiences through appropriate language and terminology.

Delivery partners must provide an environment for their children which promotes agency and belonging if they are to promote engagement in sport, equality of opportunity, and pathways to success away from anti-social and offending behaviour. LtPF enables its delivery partners to achieve this in several ways. Fundamentally, the project has broken down barriers for workers from statutory bodies to speak with young people and allowed them to be seen as supportive and trusted figures, instilling a sense of belonging. Furthermore, forming positive relationships with trusted adults through safe spaces created by LtPF empowers children and young people to be

their own agents of change, allowing them to reach out for support in a setting they have chosen to attend, rather than being forced to engage in interventions. These relationships, and the information gleaned from them, equip young people with the social capital they need to represent themselves fairly in their communities.

An Empowering Coaching training pilot to maximise children's engagement in LtPF sessions is underway with the University of Birmingham. The pilot is underpinned by extensive research and theory to better understand how the project's delivery partners can create empowering sessions that maximise children's psychological well-being and keep them motivated to take part in sport.

Inside the secure estate, the project is facilitating positive conversations and strengthening relationships between the secure estate and the community to enable children in custody better access to sport and physical activity opportunities in custody, on temporary release, and through the gate. LtPF has increased positive engagement in sport for children from ethnic minorities in the secure estate, introducing them to appropriate role models from the community, providing opportunities for new activities, and supporting an increase in trusted resettlement links for children to engage with on release.



EMERGING FINDINGS

Prevent and divert ethnically diverse children from being involved with the Criminal Justice System.

Preliminary research findings show that children engaged with LtPF, whether or not they have been in direct contact with the police, feel they have been failed by the justice system. Furthermore, there is a distinct lack of trust within minority communities towards the justice system. Acknowledging this distrust and working with communities to strengthen their relationship with the justice system is crucial to tackling racial disparities, and in turn, this may help instil a feeling of inclusion and belonging to the UK.



LtPF has facilitated relationship building at organisational and individual level to create a strong, trusted network of statutory and community organisations with a focus on prevention and diversion for children in their local area from ethnic minorities. LtPF provides the opportunity and space to build relationships between statutory and non-statutory organisations that would not otherwise have existed, and is creating a network of stakeholders across education and the community who are focused on children's health and positive outcomes, i.e. Community Sport and Health Officers and staff with a focus on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. This multi-agency working facilitates prevention as opposed to intervention when challenges/compromised functioning exists.

Through the presence of representatives from statutory services at LtPF sessions, children and young people have formed positive and trusted relationships with key individuals and developed the social capital they need to navigate through encounters with the justice system. Within the secure estate, LtPF have used their network to showcase opportunities for children in custody to connect with positive organisations from their home community who can support them through the gate, and are addressing barriers to referrals and relationship building between the Youth Custody Service and community sports partners.

The LtPF project has been remarkable in its continued effort to report the successes of third sector organisations working with ethnic minority groups which otherwise go unacknowledged, and to identify enablers for children from minorities to overcome barriers to opportunity. The project continues to create an abundance of diverse and engaging [case studies](#) which reflect good practice across a range of sports, settings, and groups.

Staff across the network have engaged in meetings with senior officials across the YJB and the [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sport and Physical Activity in the Criminal Justice System](#). Through its strong presence across the sport and justice sectors, the work of LtPF brings important issues of under/over representation higher up the agenda of statutory organisations, making the case for staff to focus on this as part of their existing roles, or to demonstrate the need for new roles in this space. Regular feedback from staff emphasises the importance of this representation as it gives minority groups a voice in the wider sport for development sector.

LTPF IS PROUD TO BE WORKING WITH:

Action for Race Equality, Active Black Country, Aptitude, Aspire Sports, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, Birmingham Youth Justice Service, Centre of Change, Climb Unity, Community Youth House, Compassion Integrity Training, Coventry Youth Justice Service, Cranfield University, Cranfield Trust, Crowden Outdoor Education Centre, Croydon Youth Justice Service, Dallaglio RugbyWorks, Decathlon, Do-IT Profiler, Ellesmere Youth Project, Fight for Change, Gloves Not Gunz, Gwent Early Help, Gwent PCC, Gwent Police, Hillside Secure Children's Home, Include Summit, HMYOI Cookham Wood, HMYOI Feltham, HMYOI Parc, HMYOI Werrington, HMYOI Wetherby, InPower Academy, Lambeth Justice Service, Leeds Rhino's, Lewisham Youth Justice Service, London Marathon Charitable Trust, London Sport, London Thunder, MAD Birmingham, Maindee Primary School, Millwall Community Trust, Mental Health First Aid England, MOPAC, New Park Village Development, Newport Live, Newport Yemini Community Association, Newport Youth Justice Service, Newport Youth Service, NHS England, NOVUS, Palace for Life Foundation, Pat Bensons Boxing Academy, Parkrun, Positive Futures, Positive Youth Foundation, Premier League Charitable Trust, Reach Up Youth, Reuse Technology Group, Rotherham United Community Sports Trust, Rotherham Youth Justice Service, Royal Holloway University of London, Saalik Youth Project, Sale Sharks, Sheffield Youth Justice Service, SnowCamp, South Yorkshire PCC, Sport 4 Life, Sport Birmingham, Sported, Sport England, Sporting Elite, Sports Connect, Sport Wales, St Michaels Gym, StreetGames, Street Soccer London, The British Mountaineering Council, The Sanctuary, ThinkActive, UNICEF UK, United by Birmingham 2022, Unity Gym Project, University of Bath, University of Birmingham, University of Gloucestershire, University of South Wales, Upshot, Urban Yogis UK, West Midlands PCC, Wolverhampton Wrestling Club, Wolverhampton Youth Justice Service, Yorkshire Sport Foundation, Young Minds Together, Youth Charter, Youth Custody Service, Youth Justice Board, Zest... And growing!



#TogetherWeDid

levellingtheplayingfield.org

