



Learning about what works in Phase Two of the Mayor of London's Sport Unites Programme

Executive Summary
NDTi, March 2025

MAYOR OF LONDON



“I know the huge difference that sport can make to physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and it's vital that all young people can take full advantage of these benefits, no matter their personal circumstances.” (Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan)

This short paper provides a summary of the latest findings from [NDTi's work as the Evaluation and Learning Partner for Phase 2 of the Sport Unites Programme](#), the Mayor of London's flagship community sports programme. The Programme supports [the Mayor's long-term vision to make London the most active and socially-integrated city in the world](#) set out in [Sport for All of Us](#) - the Mayor's strategy for sport and physical activity in London.

The main report, found [here](#), is the second of three reports from NDTi and shines a spotlight on five Sport Unites projects - describing their emerging achievements and highlighting what they have learned.

The featured spotlight projects

The following five projects were selected to reflect the diversity of Sport Unites projects, in terms of their aims, audience and stage of development:

- **London Coaches Programme (Basketball England/National Basketball Association)** – building a network of development, training and delivery opportunities for 500 new young community basketball coaches across London
- **Internships Programme (Lawn Tennis Association)** – hosting 12-month paid internships for young Londoners from groups typically underrepresented within the sports industry
- **London EmpowerHER (Rugby Football Union)** - introducing women and girls in London to rugby and teaching them skills that will be useful on and off the pitch
- **Model City London (Laureus Sport for Good Foundation)** – introducing a place-based approach to promoting positive social change through sport in three London boroughs
- **London Youth Games – inclusion and disability focus** - bringing disabled young people and their friends together in a fully inclusive setting and providing life-changing opportunities for young people to experience new sports for the first time.

Spotlight on numbers: What's the score so far?

The following numbers are from the five spotlight projects, reflecting minimum numbers based on what has been shared with the Evaluation & Learning Team; in some cases and across the Programme as a whole they will be much higher.



The spotlight projects are

- Increasing **confidence and resilience** among young people
- Helping young people to **find their voice**, both in helping to shape SU projects and influencing the wider sports sector
- Highlighting the essential contribution of **coaches and mentors**, to young people's sporting skills, and to their lives
- **Promoting friendships** among young people by strengthening existing friendship groups and making new connections
- Building a **sense of community** through new opportunities and networks
- Creating spaces that help young people to **feel safe** and increasing understanding of the factors that contribute to young people's sense of safety
- Reaching **underserved young people**, but sustaining the engagement of women and girls remains challenging for some
- **Increasing capacity** and changing the face of the sector through training and supporting diverse young people to become involved as coaches and in a range of other roles
- Making the most of **shared agendas** to change the sports sector in London to become more inclusive.

They are doing this by

- Creating a **sense of belonging** through emphasising the importance of connection and relationships
- **Working in partnership**, with partners bringing complementary things to the table and achieving greater collective impact by working together
- **Learning and adapting**, reviewing progress, abandoning what is not working well, and testing out something different
- **Using Sport Unites funding to create or build capacity**, for example extend reach, enhance delivery, develop infrastructure
- Making the most of **synergies** such as major events in the capital creating a lasting legacy in local communities
- Showcasing **role models and figureheads** that are relatable and inspire young people – sports stars and the Mayor of London
- Drawing on **London's iconic status** as a world city by making good use of legendary sporting venues and locations.



“Now that I’m part of (London Youth Games), I feel a strong sense of belonging and pride. I’ve built friendships and learned so much from my team-mates. The support and encouragement I receive have boosted my confidence, and I enjoy being part of something that celebrates diversity and teamwork.” (Participant, London Youth Games)

“I get to be me, it’s just brilliant. Running, being muddy, being dirty, running hard. I love it.” (Participant, London EmpowerHER)



What’s next

From 2025 onward, Go! London will be the main community sport fund for London building on the successes and lessons from Sport Unites over the last six years. The Mayor of London, London Marathon Foundation and Sport England have come together as funders, in collaboration with London Marathon Events and London Sport, to create Go! London – the biggest community sport fund in the capital.

This partnership is not merely a funding vehicle. By coming together, combining effort, insight and expertise, Go! London aims to simplify the capital’s sporting landscape and have a significantly greater impact in using sport and physical activity as a vehicle for social change.

The next 12 months are therefore an important period for Sport Unites projects and the opportunities they present to young Londoners. As well as continuing to deliver a wide range of activities to target groups of young people who face significant and multiple disadvantages, this is the time to share what works and the longer term impacts of participation on young Londoners life chances and wellbeing, to celebrate success stories, and collectively to address persistent barriers to their sustained engagement in sport and physical activity.