



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

Second report from NDTi – Evaluation & Learning Partner - March 2025

MAYOR OF LONDON





National Development Team for **Inclusion**

Thank you to:

Members of GLA's Sport Team who oversee the Sport Unites Programme; partners, projects and evaluators of the funded programmes and projects that contribute to the Sport Unites vision for young Londoners – for the time, contributions and insights you have so generously shared with the NDTi team. These have helped to inform our analysis and this second report. In particular we would like to thank everyone who gave their time and shared their experiences as part of the five Spotlight Studies.

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Glossary of abbreviations

BE – Basketball England

BS4C – Barking Sports for Change

CEF Lyncx – Connecting Young People in Lambeth Initiative

GLA – Greater London Authority

LCP – London Coaches Programme

LTA – Lawn Tennis Association

LYG – London Youth Games

LYG33 - the London Youth Games Youth Forum

MCL – Model City London

MFL - Mayor’s Fund for London

NBA – National Basketball Association

NDTi – National Development Team for Inclusion

RFU – Rugby Football Union

SU – Sport Unites

London’s VRU – London’s Violence Reduction Unit



Summary



“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)



“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)



This report presents the latest findings from NDTi’s work as the Evaluation and Learning Partner for Phase 2 of the Sport Unites (SU) Programme, the Mayor of London’s flagship community sports programme. The Programme supports [the Mayor of London’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 of London’s strategy for sport and physical activity in London.

This is the second of three reports from NDTi. It shines a spotlight on five SU projects, describing their emerging achievements and highlighting what they have learned. The five projects were selected to reflect the diversity of SU projects, in terms of their aims, audience and stage of development.

The featured spotlight projects are:

- ✦ [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 SU 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.



1. Overview and contexts of Sport Unites

1.1 What this report is about

This report draws together and shares 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 report has four sections that cover the following key areas:

- [Section 1](#) provides an updated overview and summary of the **key contexts** within which Sport Unites operates
- [Section 2](#) shares **five Spotlight Studies** providing an in-depth summary of the learning so far for five Sport Unites projects and funded organisations.
- [Section 3](#) summarises the **key themes** from these Spotlight Studies and evidence from other elements of Sport Unites, that tell us about progress towards the overarching vision and outcomes of the Programme
- [Section 4](#) sets out the main conclusions from this latest round up of evidence and learning across the Programme, and what this means for **what happens next** in terms of delivery and also for this evaluation and learning element.

1.2 Overview of the Sport Unites Programme

Sport Unites is the Mayor of London's flagship community sports programme. It supports [his 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 of London's strategy for sport and physical activity in London. This vision and associated programmes are focused on supporting initiatives that use sport and physical activity to tackle five priority areas in London:

- i. helping the most inactive people be more active
- ii. improving people's mental health and wellbeing
- iii. decreasing isolation and loneliness
- iv. strengthening connections in different and diverse local areas and across communities
- v. reducing the risk and impacts of violent crime on young people.

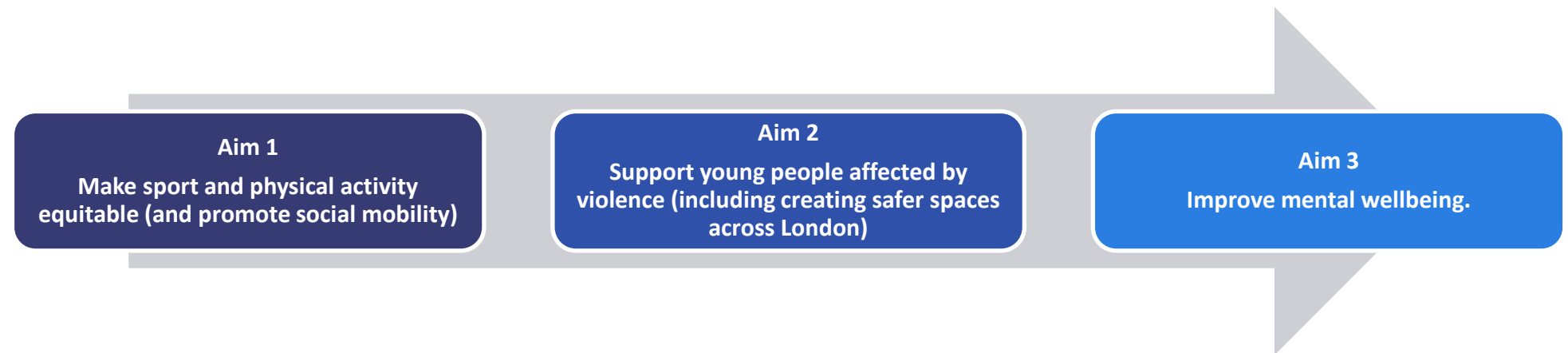
These goals are achieved by investing in projects that enable local, free or affordable interventions through the Mayor of London Sport Unites Fund. A broader objective focuses on strengthening the capability and capacity of the sport for development sector, in order that impacts and successes can be sustained over the long term.

The Sport Unites Programme was designed as two main phases of funding and delivery, with a transitional phase acting as a bridge between the two. Phase 1 ran from 2018-2020/21, with the transitional phase (which aimed to review Phase 1, at the same time as contributing towards recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic) ran from April 2021 to March 2023.

The evaluation of this transition phase, conducted by Rocket Science¹, concluded that the next era of Sport Unites needed to focus on reducing youth violence and improving support for all young people affected by violence.

Sport Unites Phase 2, 2023-2026

Phase 2 of the Sport Unites Programme covers the period from April 2023 to March 2026 and focuses on three broad aims:



Phase 2 includes a clear focus on improving the life chances of young Londoners through broadening opportunities for more and different kinds of sport and physical activity, targeting children and young people who are the most disadvantaged, inactive and experiencing the greatest inequalities.

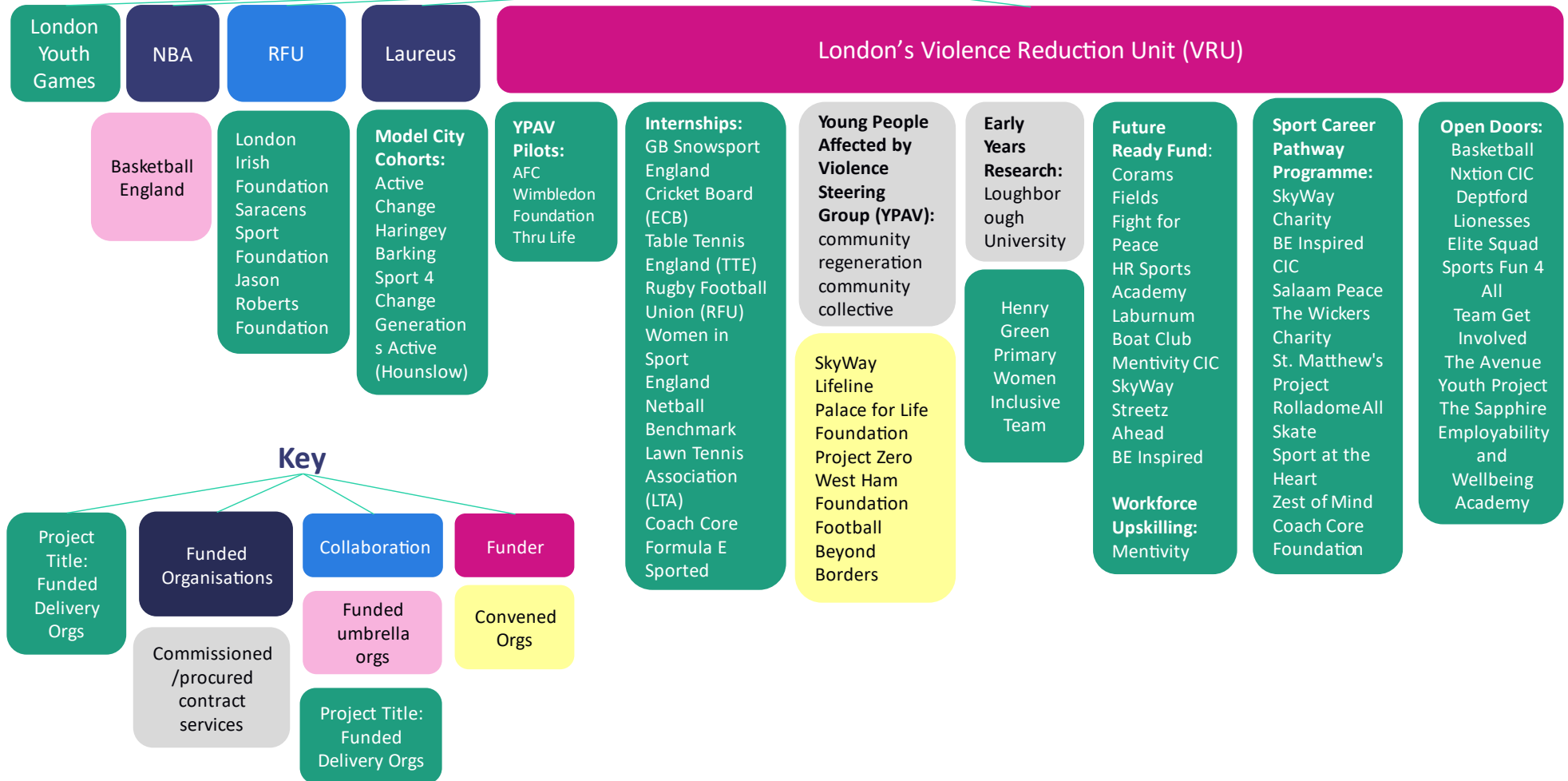
¹ *Evaluation of Sport Unites transition phase, Final Report.* Rocket Science/GLA. March 2023.

The Mayor of London's Sport Unites vision is to make London the most active and socially integrated city in the world. The Vision and Outcomes Evaluation Framework for Phase 2 of Sport Unites builds on this long term aim and develops detailed steps for demonstrating what change is happening to bring this about. The Vision and Outcomes Framework is shared in [Appendix 1](#) and summarised below:



Sport Unites has continued to evolve over the last year, since the first evaluation and learning report published in March 2024. It still covers a range of diverse projects and organisations who are funded through the Civil Society and Sport Team to contribute to the Vision and Outcomes outlined above. The Programme engages a wide range of sector stakeholders through strategic partnerships and funded programmes, as the following visual summary illustrates:

Sport Unites 2024-2026



1.3 The ever changing context of Sport Unites

Sport Unites operates in a complex and ever-changing environment, which poses both opportunities and challenges for the projects and partners that make up the Programme. For example, two major elections have taken place over the last ten months, requiring those funding, providing and evaluating community sport programmes to be adaptable whilst remaining focused on their mission and priorities.

Communities everywhere are facing challenges resulting from increased living costs and the long lasting impact of COVID-19. The General Election of 2024 resulted in a new, Labour Government and as yet, an uncertain direction for sport as a force for wider good. At the same time there are growing concerns over the physical, mental and overall wellbeing of young people, with a particular focus on young people affected by violence, alongside growing evidence of the benefits and impacts of sport and physical activity in helping to address these issues.

The previous, Conservative Government of 2022-2024 published a national strategy on sport and physical activity², but it is not yet clear where this agenda sits within the current Labour Government's priorities. In London, the agenda for sport and physical activity has been set for the last six years, through the Mayor of London's strategy Sport For All Of Us³, which supports his long-term vision to make London the most active and socially integrated city in the world. Sadiq Khan's re-election in Spring 2024 as the Mayor of London provides important stability in taking this agenda forward, albeit within the context of increasingly challenging environment outlined above. 2025 heralds some major global as well as national events hosted by UK cities, including London – such as the Women's Rugby World Cup in various cities, the World Boxing Championships in Liverpool, and the 153rd Open at Royal Portrush. These events are important hooks and offer their own investment programmes for broadening the reach and increasing participation of all young people in line with the Mayor of London's aims of positioning London as the major sporting capital of the world.

Sport is increasingly recognised as a powerful tool for promoting positive social change in areas like education, health, community building and peacebuilding. It does this by harnessing its unifying powers to reach and engage underserved communities and individuals, especially young people, across diverse backgrounds. For example, as a recent article⁴ states:

Disadvantage and inequality have many different faces. Solutions need to flex for each individual and address multiple issues over a sustained period of time. Sport is no panacea, but as the Centre for Social Justice's 2023 report "[Game Changer](#)" demonstrated, sport's power is that it can work on multiple levels and bring physical, mental, emotional and social benefits in a single setting. It's time for current ministers to reread that report to see how sport offers an effective tool for social change.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-active-a-strategy-for-the-future-of-sport-and-physical-activity/get-active-a-strategy-for-the-future-of-sport-and-physical-activity>

³ *Sport For All Of Us: The Mayor's Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity*. Mayor of London. 2018

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2025/jan/05/lets-champion-our-mentors-as-well-as-sports-trophy-winners-in-2025>

This article also draws attention to the need for relational approaches and skilled personnel in the form of coaches and mentors which is a key finding from this latest round up of evidence from the Sport Unites Programme.

Sports clubs and physical activity groups in many areas are becoming more than simply somewhere a child comes to have fun, get active and learn more about a sport. In many cases they offer a safe haven where children can connect and build relationships, find care and comfort, and a way to get back on track. It's less about learning the finer points of a forehand or backhand and more about finding someone who will listen.

Coaches do increasingly important work in this area, often fulfilling more of a youth worker role than technical sports expert. And alongside them, a largely invisible but increasingly crucial army of sports mentors is growing around the country. Largely unsung heroes, scrappily funded, but using the valuable life skills and insights they gained from sport, they are reaching out to young people struggling to find their way.

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. Through this new £19.5 million partnership, together they aim to:

- Build a fairer London
- Strengthen and diversify the capital's sport and physical activity sector
- Reduce barriers to physical activity that children and young people face, to tackle social and economic inequalities.

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.

1.4 Evaluation and Learning in Phase 2

The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) was commissioned as the Evaluation and Learning Partner for Phase 2 of the Sport Unites Programme, providing a “test and learn” approach to building a Programme-wide picture of impact alongside the delivery of funded organisations and their projects. NDTi’s role is to:

- Distil all the various sources of evidence, impact and learning that exist across the Programme, and which is held in different places by a mixture of the GLA, programme partners, project teams and delivery organisations;
- Analyse and make sense of the aggregate impacts and lessons that emerge from this distillation, over the course of this Phase;
- Provide opportunities and resources for partners and stakeholders to come together, learn and embed the evidence of what works, for whom, how and why.

Please see the Evaluation & Learning Team’s timeline in [Appendix 2](#) for further details.

The key findings and themes identified in our first evaluation report are provided in [Appendix 3](#), and the full report can be found [here](#).

[Section 2](#) of this report shares evidence and examples of what works for different target groups of young people from the five Spotlights, and Section 3 summarises the cross cutting themes and lessons about what this tells us about progress towards Phase 2’s vision and outcomes.





2. Shining a Spotlight on Five Sport Unites Developments

2.1 About this section

This section sets out the learning from five Sport Unites projects, which were selected with the support of the GLA Sport Team to reflect the range and scope of the Programme. The projects vary in their project aims, target audiences, size and stage of development. In each case, the Spotlight Study describes what has happened to date, what the impact has been, what lessons have been learned and what the project's future plans are.

The five projects described in this section are:

- ✦ [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.

2.2 London Coaches Programme (NBA)



“It’s shaped me as a coach and as a person in myself. It’s given me confidence.” (Coach)

“Coaches are often left after being taught. The benefit of this programme is not leaving them, (but) affording them broader opportunities. these opportunities open your mind to possibilities that you might never even think of.” (Mentor)



Background

The London Coaches Programme (LCP) is a three-year partnership initiative between the Mayor of London and the National Basketball Association (NBA). It is delivered by Basketball England (BE) and aims to build a network of free development, training and delivery opportunities for 500 new community coaches aged between 16 and 30 across the capital.

What has happened?

LCP is made up of several elements, with some input delivered in face-to-face workshop sessions, combined with online training. Uniquely, the Programme also includes individual mentoring, and signposting to clubs and work opportunities.

So far, four cohorts have been launched, with a review process between each one.

By January 2025:

- **235** coaches had completed the first part of the coaching qualification (they are eligible to be assistant coaches)
- **102** coaches had finished the second part of the coaching qualification (they are eligible to work alone)
- **20** coach mentors were in place across London (15 active mentors and 5 who had finished their mentoring period)
- **8,300** young people have been coached by LCP coaches between December 2023 and March 2025. It is forecasted that 13,500 young people will be coached by LCP coaches by June 2026.



What has been the impact?

The LCP is helping to make a difference both to coaches and to basketball in London.

For coaches, it offers:

- a **strong network**, connecting them with peers and with the wider basketball world
- **access to experience, knowledge and resources**, through their mentors and bodies such as the NBA, BE and GLA
- **increased self-confidence**, both as coaches and as individuals
- **employment and other opportunities**, such as paid roles in successful clubs, or involvement in international events

For basketball in London, it is:

- providing a **vibrant new focal point** for the sport in London, and creating a real sense of energy around basketball
- creating **London synergies**, for example with the Mayor of London's new Basketball Task Force
- pioneering **new ways of delivering coach training** that work for diverse young coaches

What are the key lessons for others?

The LCP highlights the importance of:

- offering additional **opportunities and networks** alongside coaching training, widening horizons and opening up possibilities
- **setting a positive tone** that helps coaches to feel supported and part of something bigger
- drawing on the different contributions and **strengths of partners**
- building in time for **review and adaptation**, so that the programme is constantly evolving and improving.

2.3 Spotlight: Internships Programme (Lawn Tennis Association)

Background



“The culture of the LTA has a core focus on colleague engagement. A major part of the success of the internship is that we’re included in that culture.” (Intern)



The Sport Internship Programme provides 12-month paid internship opportunities to young Londoners from groups typically underrepresented within the sports industry. 12 organisations have hosted interns, including the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), which features in this spotlight study. These organisations are all leaders in the sport industry and include national sports umbrella bodies.

What has happened?

The lead LTA colleague introduced the internship project to colleagues and started designing **a workplan for the interns at an early stage**, before recruitment had taken place.

The LTA reviewed and tailored their **recruitment approach** to help them attract under-served young people, by tapping into informal networks and community-based delivery partners. As part of the shortlisting process, they looked at applicants’ postcodes, mapped against indices of deprivation, as a proxy for under-served communities.

An **experience day for shortlisted applicants** was another new addition. This included an overview of the LTA and a game of padel, making it an engaging, inclusive and fun introduction to the organisation.

Two interns were recruited through the revised process and started work at the LTA in May 2024.

The programme consisted of **a series of ‘rotations’ between different LTA departments**, to give the interns experience of a wide range of different activities and roles. Rotations included time with the major events team at the LTA Queen’s tournament, and with the Coaching, Competitions and Safeguarding teams. The interns were also involved in **bespoke projects**, for example with a focus on Black tennis, and presented to the whole staff team at a Black History Month event.

What has been the impact?

The internship programme has had a significant impact, not only on the interns, but also on the LTA's staff and ways of working.

On the interns:

- **Greater confidence and self-belief** as a result of successfully taking on a wide range of new and different challenges
- Rapid **growth in skills** because the programme was designed to give the interns a taste of different roles and varied types of work
- **Increased self awareness** about areas such as strengths, development priorities and interests, which has grown through the structured mentoring sessions
- **Excellent networks** – inside the LTA and also with partners
- **Access to organisational support**, not only during the internship, but also in helping interns plan and **prepare for their next move**.

On the organisation:

- A more **inclusive recruitment process**, as a result of incorporating the learning from the intern recruitment
- **Greater openness and awareness** because the interns have been high profile and their contribution has been valued
- **New and organisationally useful skills** among LTA colleagues, for example mentoring.

What are the key lessons?

The LTA's experience highlights the importance of:

- Aligning the work of the interns with the **organisation's priorities** so that their roles are embedded within the core business
- Designing a programme for interns that gives them **visibility and profile**, as well as building their skills through rotations across different teams and roles
- Ensuring that there is a range of **support** available, particularly mentoring, including from: *"People who understand, who look like me."*
- Preparing to be flexible, and to **test and learn** new and different ways of working (for example trying out new approaches to recruitment)
- Promoting **organisational culture** and behaviour that emphasise engagement and inclusion
- Making the most of the internship as an **opportunity for organisational learning**, as well as a way of developing the interns
- Understanding the **interns' willingness to grasp the opportunities** offered by the internship.

2.4 London EmpowerHER (RFU)



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

“Seeing girls loving the sport is amazing, it keeps us going.” (Volunteer, Redbridge)



Background

The London EmpowerHER project aimed to help grow the game in London, building on the capital’s status as one of the Women’s Rugby World Cup’s host cities. It aimed to engage women and girls in non-contact rugby in community venues, including schools, and led by local third sector organisations. The plan was to build a pathway that allowed women and girls to move easily from taster sessions, to after school or weekend sessions, finally to playing at a club.

The project was a partnership project between Rugby Football Union (RFU) and the Mayor of London and was piloted in two London boroughs, Brent and Redbridge. It focused on reaching women and girls from underserved communities, promoting physical fitness while also helping them to develop skills that would be important later in life.

What has happened?

The partners selected to deliver the pilot were:

In Redbridge: Saracens Sports Foundation and Newark Youth London (who later withdrew because of capacity issues)

In Brent: London Irish Foundation and Jason Roberts Foundation

During the pilot, partners across the two boroughs:

- Delivered **109 sessions** in school/community settings
- Worked with **13 schools**
- Organised **4 festivals** or tournaments



What has been the impact?

A large, new, diverse group of women and girls have engaged with rugby through London EmpowerHER:

- **2,641** women and girls have participated
- Between **70% and 80%** of participants were from minority ethnic communities
- Around **80% continued to play rugby** regularly after taking part in the pilot
- At Saracens Sports Foundation and Jason Roberts Foundation **55-60%** of participants had never played before and at London Irish Foundation, **no participants had played before.**

In addition, London EmpowerHER made a difference to the women and girls who took part in the following ways:

- increasing **self confidence**
- feeling an impact on **fitness** levels
- valuing **teamwork**
- building stronger **connections** and friendships between women and girls.



What are the key lessons?

- **The local context** influences success, particularly a place's rugby history and infrastructure - is it a 'rugby borough/town'?
- **Community organisations can be great partners**, but they often lack capacity, and building the relationships and trust that underpin community initiatives **takes time**
- **A flexible partnership model** evolved over the course of the pilot, which contained two key elements:
 - community partners working alongside clubs and schools, with the best placed organisation in the area taking the lead;
 - pathway/range of diverse opportunities for women and girls to participate, engage, play and progress
- **Culture and history of clubs:** *'Navigating the politics of a 100 year old rugby club is challenging. We do have their support, but it still takes time to shift mindsets and ensure the club is set up for girls and women.'* (Volunteer, Redbridge)
- **Festivals & tournaments** play an important role – not just for the games, but for the inspiring activities around these
- **Tackling wider, societal barriers** is key – a wider issue that ran through the project was how best to support women and girls to continue to be active outside/post school, for example, by addressing concerns about travel and personal safety.

2.5 Model City London (Laureus Sport for Good Foundation)



“Through MCL, I have become a role model and learnt how to support the community. We help set up for local events unless it clashes with my school times. We help out, play with the kids, encourage them to join in.....It’s an easy and fun atmosphere and if it’s not competitive then we can get them to participate more in sport.”

(MCL participant from Barking Sport for Change)



Background

Model City London (MCL) was launched in 2018 by Laureus Sport for Good Foundation in partnership with the Mayor of London and Nike, with the aim of boosting sports participation, reducing social isolation, and improving mental wellbeing in three London boroughs. Also a focus was to ensure that each of the coalitions had a legal status and were financially sustainable by the end of the programme. Over the last six years, MCL has been building and delivering a wide range of new opportunities for sport and physical activity in Barking, Haringey, and Hounslow. Each of these boroughs has a Coalition of local people in place, with organisations working together, supported by Laureus, to deliver change through sport and physical activity in their area. Since 2019, these three Coalitions have been coproducing local strategies, visions and outcomes based on the priority issues that matter most to local people.

From 2022 to 2024 the two key priorities for all the Coalition areas were to:

- increase the engagement and participation of more young people, including those from specific target groups
- build sustainably funded, independent Coalitions led by local partners and communities.

What has happened?

Between 2022-2024 **engagement and participation** have increased:

- A total of **802 young participants** have engaged in a wide variety of different opportunities (against a target of 633 participants)
- **Over half of this total were women and girls** reflecting the success of targeted approaches and support in all three boroughs
- **147 of this total were disabled young people**
- Systems for **increasing youth voice and decision making** have been effectively set up in each coalition area.

The three Coalitions are now **operating independently**:

- **All three Coalitions are now registered, independent bodies** with their own grant funding which is being used to invest in ongoing delivery of effective sports programmes.

What has been the impact?

- **Increased participation** - **81%** of all participants reported that they are more likely to engage in sports post-programme
- **Improved wellbeing** - **90%** of participants reported that they had made new friends and participants' self-esteem, resilience and overall happiness had also improved
- **New and transferable skills** - **65%** of all participants took on leadership roles through MCL projects, broadened their horizons and developed a range of new skills.

What are the key lessons?

- The **place-based model** supports communities to work alongside local organisations to identify and then address local issues through sport – and it works. It relies on:
 - a genuine commitment to coproducing locally determined outcomes based on the most pressing issues facing young people
 - collaborating to secure funding to address these needs
 - learning about what works in engaging young people in sport and physical activity
- Participants expressed **greater commitment to physical activity** and new interest in sports thanks to:
 - friendships, relationships, connection and fun
 - availability of a diverse offer
 - positive relationships with coaches/mentors.
- **Partnerships underpin everything**, are based on mutual understanding and trust, and take time to develop:
- Informal engagement methods combined with targeted approaches enable the full participation of individuals and groups who are most often excluded from opportunities for sport and physical activity
- **Young people are altruistic and determined** – they want to develop their own skills, grow as rounded citizens, gain paid and meaningful employment, and those who have benefited from MCL also want to see the programme expand so that others may benefit.

2.6 London Youth Games – inclusion and disability focus



“It’s a great way to meet others and have fun whilst learning about sporting opportunities and encouraging others to take part. You feel part of a team which is really positive. Being part of LYG33 also meant that I had access to experiences that I didn’t before” (Sam, LYG participant and LYG33 member)

“The organisation has allowed me to travel to places I have never stepped foot in, which is quite cool” (Beth, LYG33 Inclusion Lead)



Background

The London Youth Games (LYG) is widely recognised as one of the Europe’s leading annual youth sports initiatives, underpinned by a vision to create the largest and most inclusive city focused youth games. As part of realising this vision, the GLA’s Sport Team, through Sport Unites, and LYG Board have invested in a three-year programme that extends from the 2022-23 to the 2025-26 seasons, to create a sustained focus on inclusion in order to diversify the Games.

What has happened?

The programme includes the following elements, which operate in different locations and settings across London:

- **Open Games** (community sport)
- **School Games** (school sport)
- **Para Games** (disability inclusive sport)
- **Games Force** (volunteering)
- **Inclusive Coaches** (coach development)
- **LYG33** (youth engagement and leadership).

New elements that have been introduced to the programme include: girls’ inclusive basketball, multi-sports festival, pentathlon, hockey skills festival, sitting volleyball festival, learning disability and sensory tennis, inclusive dynamos, three Inspire Festivals and two adapted Inspire Festivals.

What has been the impact?

Widening participation

By 2024:

- **29** boroughs were actively engaged in LYG's inclusive programmes and activities
- **1,681** participants across all of the core Games offers identified as disabled
- **338** of this total were engaged in new events and sports introduced as a result of this programme
- **124** volunteers identified as disabled
- **21** inclusive coaches, who between them represent 15 different boroughs, identified as disabled;
 - **70%** of these coaches were completing bespoke coaching qualifications to meet their needs and aspirations.
 - **75%** had volunteered at LYG inclusive events, including a group leading a multisport station at the LYG Adapted Inspire Festive West
 - **55%** were female coaches
 - **25%** of all LYG coaches identified as having a disability.

Strengthening the voice of young people

LYG33 empowers young Londoners aged 14–24 to influence youth sport across London. By participating in LYG33, young Londoners can build their confidence, leadership skills, and sense of community. By 2024:

- **Nine young people (25%) within LYG33 identified as disabled**, an increase of 7% from the 2023-24 cohort.
- The leadership of LYG33 included **two inclusion leads** whose focus is to diversify the workforce of the LYG and influence the shape of LYG para and inclusive events.

Personal development among young people

Involvement in LYG has made a difference to young people in the following ways:

- A strong **sense of belonging**, connections and friendships
- **Personal development** and growth including leadership and teamwork skills and improved performance in specific sports
- **Widening horizons** through opportunities to develop and take up new roles

What are the key lessons?

- Recognise the importance of **friendships, connections and fun** to underpin teamworking and boost confidence
- Build in peer advice and support, and **peer mentoring**
- The **warm, inclusive approach of LYG staff** has been key in helping to build self-confidence in all aspects of participants' lives
- Embed inclusive design and delivery into LYG, so that in future, inclusion is seen as **everybody's business**
- The success of LYG relies on **proactive partnership building and constant review and evolution.**



3. What are we learning about progress towards Sport Unites Outcomes?

3.1 About this section

The five spotlight projects featured in the last section are a combination of initiatives that focus primarily on increasing participation among young people (London EmpowerHER, LYG, MCL) and developments to bring young people into the sports workforce in London (LCP, internships). But although the five projects have very different aims and delivery approaches, they have many aspects in common and highlight some similar issues. This section draws together the shared learning and themes from the five spotlight SU projects, illustrating these not only with experience from the spotlight projects, but also bringing in examples and stories from across the wider SU Programme, as described in section 1 of this report.

Part 1 uses the coproduced SU vision and outcome areas as a broad organising framework for our observations and analysis (capturing signs of change, progress towards outcomes etc).

Part 2 briefly summarises the learning about **how** SU projects are starting to make a difference across London.

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.



3.2. Progress towards vision and outcomes

Vision

Young people in London have better lives, greater opportunities and more hopeful futures through taking part in sport and physical activity



Outcome 1

Young people feel empowered, resilient, in control of their lives and know they have a voice

Increased confidence and resilience among young people

"My confidence was at 3 before joining the programme. Now it is at 9.9." (MCL)

Across the spotlight projects, young people are reporting that they feel more confident as a result of their engagement with SU initiatives.

The interns (both at the LTA and in other organisations), and the coaches trained by LCP reported that the experiences and support they had received had increased their confidence and self-belief, boosting their aspirations and future career prospects. This shift was also confirmed by the people they had worked alongside:

"(The intern) has become much more confident and is taking ownership of some elements of projects." (Mentor)

MCL participants reported a range of personal benefits, including increased self-confidence.

".. participants reported developing a wide range of skills through their involvement in MCL, including self-belief and confidence, responsibility and care, networking, problem-solving, intuition, leadership, teamwork, communication, patience, understanding and tolerance, organisational skills, computer proficiency, CV writing, public speaking, collaboration, resilience, focus, and social skills."

Beyond the five spotlight projects, too, there is strong evidence of increased confidence among young people, for example:

"Parents have reported a noticeable improvement in the CYPs' confidence. They have observed a positive change in how the young people approach dilemmas, with an increased ability to navigate challenges. Additionally, the CYPs have shown enhanced communication skills, effectively expressing their thoughts and feelings when facing difficulties." (Streetz Ahead)

Young people's voice

"I never thought I could lead a group of people, but after getting involved with the youth panel, I feel like I can actually make a difference." (Participant, MCL)

"Before the programme, I wasn't very confident, but being in a leadership role has boosted my confidence. I was in situations where before I thought I would be disregarded or not listened to, but here I've been listened to and that's made me feel good." (Participant, MCL)

Involving young people in shaping projects and the wider sector has been a key feature of SU. Useful learning emerges from MCL, where the most recent phase placed a strong emphasis on engagement. Initially the Coalitions adopted a traditional meeting structure for the newly established Youth Panels, with a formal agenda, but this format did not work well for the young people involved, who found it overly restrictive. Meetings are now more flexible and creative in style.

The insights provided by young people have directly influenced coalitions' strategic plans, ensuring that their voices are reflected in key decisions. 100% of youth panel members reported their voices were acknowledged and their opinions valued.

The experience of having a voice had a profound impact on some youth panel members, as described below.

Story – From Hounslow to the Houses of Parliament

The experience of one participant, a 17-year-old male from Hounslow who visited Parliament, also highlights the powerful personal impact that the programme can have. His experience, described as a “huge milestone” that brought pride to his family, illustrates the potential for significant personal growth when young people are given opportunities that extend beyond their usual environment. The visit to Parliament was organised by KO Club Trust in Hounslow to deliver youth voice findings to their local member of Parliament, Seema Malhotra. This case demonstrates the value of experiential learning in boosting confidence, showing that they can engage with their local representatives and creating meaningful memories.

“[Young participant], in particular, took a lot from the experience of going to Parliament as part of the programme: he wore a suit and later framed the letter from our MP on his wall. It was a huge milestone for his family who are from war-torn DRC. His parents are really proud, it really meant something to them.” (MCL)

In 2024, for the first time, LYG33 (the London Youth Games Youth Forum) had a Leadership Team who have helped shape sessions held throughout the year whilst also supporting their peers. Each LYG member of staff worked with a LYG33 Leadership team member, to ensure a youth perspective to their work. The Leadership team includes two Inclusion Leads whose focus is to “diversify the workforce” and helping to shape future development of LYG para and inclusive events and programmes.

There is evidence that the young people who are taking part in the internship programme are, in some cases, able to influence their host organisations, most of which are national umbrella bodies. England Netball, for example, commented that their intern brings not only her perspective as a member of an underserved community, but also as a young person – her ideas and views have been very useful to the organisation.

The contribution of coaches and mentors

“Our mentors are supportive about how we can improve.” (Intern)

“My coach is always my go-to person for advice, for anything. They help with everything from writing my CV to helping me lead the activities with the younger kids. They give a lot to people. They want us to learn and progress, guiding us as much as [they] can.” (Participant, MCL)

The role of coaches and mentors continues to be hugely significant for participants in SU projects, both in helping them progress in sport and in their lives.

Mentoring support offered to young basketball coaches as part of LCP, and the mentoring of interns was very valuable to young people with aspirations to enter the sports workforce in London. Mentoring offered an opportunity to reflect and to bolster self-belief, with in many cases, the Skills Builder framework providing a useful starting point and focus for discussions.

“Skills Builder has been a really good thing for the internship. Without it, mentoring wouldn’t have been so structured.”

(Mentor)

68% of participants in MCL initiatives expressed strong connections to their mentors. In London EmpowerHER, coaches were using rugby as a platform for building confidence and character among women and girls. Some coaches were extremely skilled in developing this, with one school recognising that teaching staff had much to learn from community coaches.

The Future Ready projects were supporting younger children with mentors to help them navigate the transition between primary and senior school. This was in turn helping them to build positive relationships with peers, linking to outcome area 2, below:

“The young people that have transitioned into secondary school are developing more meaningful self-reflections within their mentoring sessions. A key theme is positive relationships and being able to identify positive relationships within peer groups. As they find their place within the school community they are able to build solid relationships with other young people experiencing the same things as them in their first year of senior education.” (Be inspired, Future Ready)

Peer mentoring was also highlighted by some projects, including LYG and MCL, and brought benefits to the older/more established young people who were acting as mentors, as well as to the mentees:

“With some younger participants joining the sessions, older young people have stepped up as peer mentors, providing motivation and guidance both during training and mentoring. This peer-to-peer support has fostered a sense of responsibility among the older participants while helping the younger ones settle in and gain confidence.” (Coram’s Fields, Future Ready)



Outcome 2

Young people are connected, and have a sense of belonging

Importance of friendship groups

Friendships and relationships lie at the heart of Sport Unites projects. The central role played by coaches and mentors was described in the previous section. Connections with peers were also extremely important, in terms of developing new friendships through sport, working with existing friendship groups and also being socially integrated.

The women and girls taking part in London EmpowerHER spoke about the importance of playing alongside their friends on the pitch, and also in helping them to feel safe when they went somewhere new, such as a community venue or rugby club.

“Going with friends makes me feel comfortable, looking out for each other.” (Participant, Brent)

The importance of engaging with friendship groups was highlighted by other SU projects, for example:

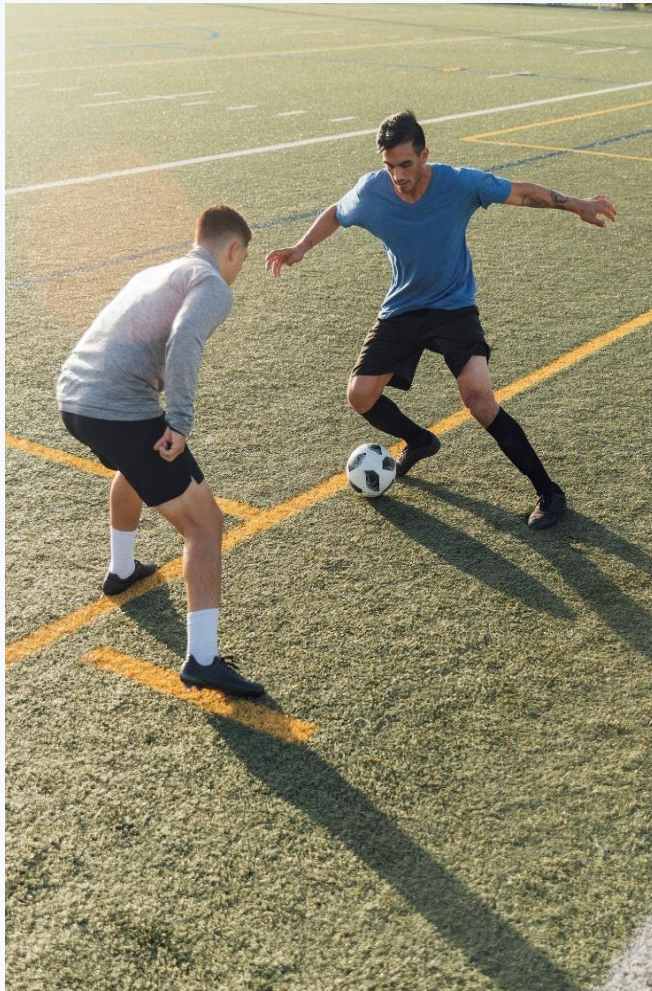
“... many young people want to engage or will engage more if their friends or peers are joining with them. We have learnt that as long as we have capacity we should allow friend and peers to participate to increase the engagement of those at most risk.” (Laburnum Boat Club, Future Ready)

Making new friends

Spotlight projects also highlight the contribution of SU in helping participants to forge new friendships. For example, MCL helped to build social connections among the young people who took part, with 90% of participants reporting new friendships and 65% taking on leadership roles. Jack, one of the LYG33 Ambassadors points to the importance of friendships made through getting involved in the Youth Forum as well as participating in different games:

“I’ve built friendships and learned so much from my team-mates. The support and encouragement I receive boosted my confidence, and I enjoy being part of something that celebrates diversity and teamwork.”

Arsen's story – a sense of belonging



“Arsen arrived in the UK from Ukraine when the conflict began, facing the immense challenges of being in a new country without knowing anyone or speaking the language. From the very beginning, we invited him to join our holiday Activity programmes where he began forming friendships, discovering ways to communicate, and finding a sense of belonging within the community.

Arsen now regularly participates in our weekly Kicks sessions. Over time, he has developed his confidence, found his voice, and shown remarkable resilience in facing challenges head-on. Throughout his time with us, Arsen has earned numerous awards, including his positive behaviour, openness and honesty with coaches, and his impressive sporting ability. His rapport with the team has been a testament to his character and his commitment to personal growth.

What has impressed us most is how Arsen has become a positive influence on those around him. He actively encourages new participants to join Kicks and serves as a role model through his dedication and attitude.

It's clear that through our programme, Arsen now feels safer in his community to thrive and we are thrilled to witness his continued progress.”

(AFC Wimbledon Foundation Safer Spaces pilot)

Opportunities and networks are creating a sense of community

Spotlight projects intentionally adopted ways of working that promoted inclusion and a sense of community. For LCP, for example, the positive emphasis on networks, relationships and connection set a distinctive tone for the programme, leaving coaches feeling that they were supported and were part of something larger.

MCL also found that:

“Exposure to a variety of sports and the supportive community created by MCL were pivotal in helping participants develop a lasting interest in staying active.”

Many similar examples exist in projects beyond the five featured in the previous section, for example:

“Strong peer-to-peer relationships have developed, and consistent attendance from younger participants highlights a growing sense of belonging and community. These connections have been particularly beneficial for those who previously struggled with social integration or lacked a reliable support network.” (AFC Wimbledon Foundation Safer Spaces pilot)

The following story underlines the contribution a sense of belonging can make to children and young people, even those who have experienced the most extreme trauma.

Story – From trauma to a sense of belonging

‘One standout case is a young girl who began her education at age eight after arriving in England, having previously never attended school. She experienced severe trauma in her home country, witnessing death and violence. Initially, she struggled with disruptive behaviour, often acting out, being loud, and failing to follow instructions.

Through our leadership and team-building sessions, she has begun to channel her energy constructively, follow instructions more effectively, and express her emotions in healthier ways. Her engagement in school has improved as she learns desired behaviours from peers and develops a sense of belonging.’ (HR Sports, Future Ready)



Outcome 3

Young people feel safe, within their local communities and within London

Feeling safe

Feeling safe is an essential foundation to young people's participation in sport, so understanding and addressing what young people say makes them feel safe has been key for SU projects.

London EmpowerHER explored the factors that help women and girls to feel safe when they are outside home and school. A strong and consistent message was that girls felt safest when they were with their friends, looking out for each other. Many were uncomfortable using public transport, particularly alone, so preferred the venues they used for sport and fun to be within walking distance. This has clear implications for the location of sporting opportunities.

Some young people had developed strategies to increase their sense of safety when travelling. For example, members of MCL's Youth Panel in Haringey met in a coffee shop that was close to their homes before travelling together to meetings. However, safety was affecting the future sustainability of the Panels:

“We need to have a physical space to do these activities. Right now it is too logistically difficult to get together. We need somewhere to meet, and to know how to get there safely.” (MCL)

Creating safe spaces

Several projects described their work to create safe spaces for young people.

For example, the Mayor's Fund for London (MFL) offered summer activities and food during the summer holidays, providing additional capacity to providers and projects. It forms part of the VRU programme.

The CEF Lyncx partnership with MFL in Lambeth has provided not only lunch and activities, it has also offered a space where young people could thrive and stay away from potentially harmful places and situations.

“The food is the magnet because it pulled me out of the house; I come, play, learn, and made friends too.”

‘The environment is where I feel safe, supported, and empowered to grow.’

Residents of Windmill Park, where the activities were held, commented that seeing young people in structured, positive settings improved the overall sense of safety in the area. Incidents of antisocial behaviour in the area reduced.



Outcome 4

The most inactive and excluded children and young people, and those at risk of inactivity, are becoming more active

Projects are reaching underserved young people

The spotlight projects have been successful in engaging with young people from underserved communities, with many projects specifically aimed at young people who are more likely to experience barriers to participation.

London Youth Games’ ambition to be the most inclusive games is underpinned by an increasingly diverse offer of adapted, inclusive and para games with new sports and support developed year on year.

“Our ambition is for all events to feel a welcome and accessible place for young people with disabilities.....Inclusion by design across all our events is an area that with greater capacity we would look to fuel greater focus on in 2025 and future years.”

(LYG Inclusion Impact Report 2024)

London EmpowerHER aimed to extend opportunities to play rugby to women and girls from diverse communities with no history of participation. Of the 2,256 women and girls who participated, between 70% and 80% of participants were from minority ethnic communities. In two of the delivery organisations 55-60% of participants had never played before and in the third, none of the participants had played before.

The three MCL locations in the capital were selected partly because of demography, focusing particularly on areas where activity levels were low. The programme significantly improved participation in sports and physical activities, with 802 young people engaged, including 427 girls. This shift appears to be sustainable, as participants showed a marked increase in their likelihood of engaging in other sports or physical activities post-programme (81%).

As set out below, under Outcome Area 5, national sports umbrella bodies (such as the LTA, Formula E and England Netball) have redesigned their recruitment processes as part of the internship programme. This will ensure that young people from underserved communities will in future have a better chance of gaining experience and employment opportunities in the sports sector that were previously difficult for them to access.

Supporting and sustaining involvement of girls remains challenging for some projects

The London EmpowerHER spotlight sets out some of the barriers to girls' participation in sport. However, MCL, for example, over time succeeded in increasing the numbers of women and girls taking part. It achieved this increase through thoughtful programme design, based on what women and girls were telling them, for example by delivering a wider range of activities for girls to sample.

In at least one mixed project, boys were able to provide a supportive environment:

“The boys have been incredibly supportive of the one girl attending the sessions. Despite being the only female player, she is valued as a team member, and her contributions are greatly appreciated by her peers—a fantastic example of inclusivity within the group.” (Coram's Fields, Future Ready)



Outcome 5

Highly skilled staff are delivering this work in appropriate and accessible spaces, and organisations are working together in a climate that values and promotes sport and physical activity

Increasing capacity and changing the face of the sector in London

SU projects are opening up opportunities within the sector to diverse young people. The internships programme, for example, is changing the approach of participating organisations to recruitment to attract applicants from a much wider range of backgrounds and communities.

The LTA spotlight illustrates the impact that the internship has had on the wider organisation. Other host organisations have also redesigned their recruitment process. Netball England has now started forging direct partnerships with schools, colleges and universities as a result of their difficulty in recruiting interns.

Formula E has also changed their process:

“The aim was to shift the focus away from qualifications and experience and instead put the focus on innate talent, passion and potential.”

Through SU large numbers of new young coaches are entering the sector in London, with around 300 basketball coaches benefiting from LCP. The coaches also form part of a new and vibrant network that is acting as a focus for all things basketball in the capital, providing a platform for future developments.

Building new partnerships

“[As part of MCL] I’ve collaborated with many organisations in the area) – it shows how you can work together outside of your organisations, tap into funding (joint bids) and be able to deliver your objectives. For example, I’m able to run a summer camp this year because of a joint bid we did.” (MCL)

SU projects were delivered by, or in partnership with community and third sector organisations. The community roots, trusted status and reach of these organisations makes an important contribution towards attracting underserved young people into sport and activity. In addition closer partnership working can help to reduce competition and mistrust between organisations and to unlock resources, as highlighted above.

The MCL approach brings together local organisations into coalitions that remain part of the communities they serve. Members find these new connections useful, with 100% of coalition members reporting feeling supported by their peers.

Coalition leads have played a central role in brokering new partnership developments that benefit local people, such as:

“Innovative solutions to local challenges, such as the GP pop-ups organised alongside sporting events, which helped the community engage with health services that are typically difficult to access.”

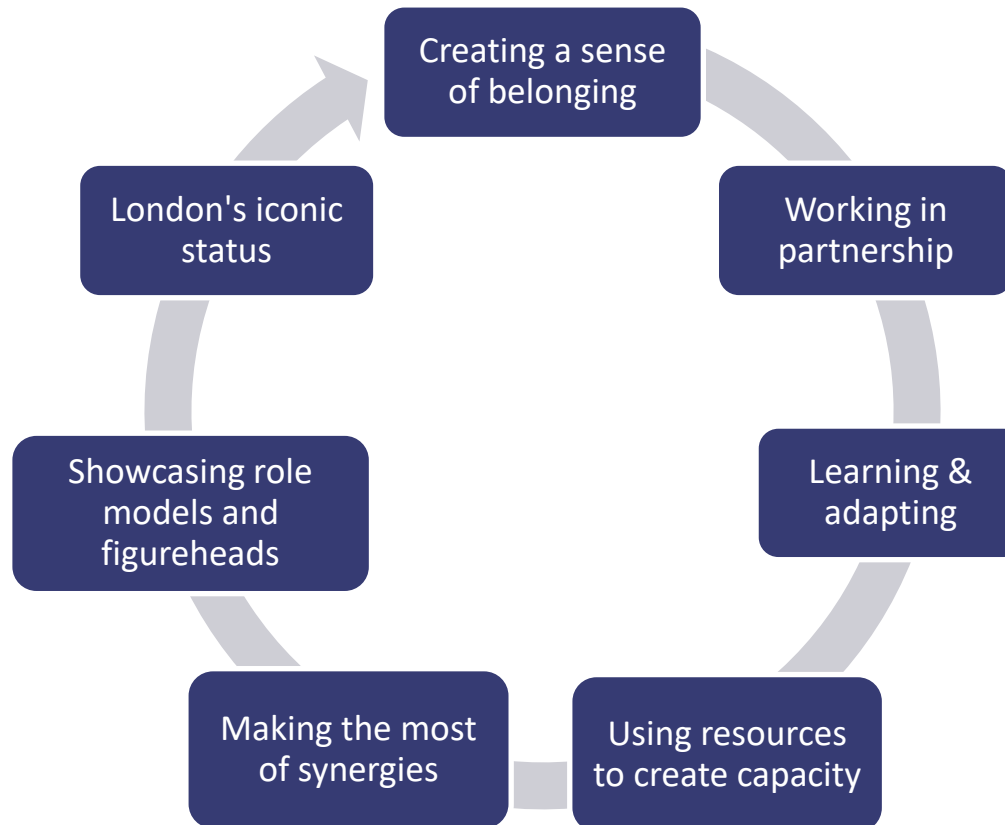
Synergies and shared agendas

SU projects are making the most of synergies and shared agendas, where both the Mayor of London and the funded organisation had common goals. For example, the spotlights show that LTA and LCP were both wanting to change and improve aspects of their activities, and working alongside the GLA Sport Team through SU enabled them to achieve their aspirations.

3.3. What are we learning about how Sport Unites projects are achieving positive outcomes?

This brief section summarises **how** the spotlight projects, plus others from the wider SU Programme are working to make a difference for young people, organisations and the wider sector in London, as described in Section 3, Part 1, above.

The spotlight projects have adopted a flexible, inclusive working style that is characterised by the factors below.



Creating a sense of belonging

Most of the spotlight projects have worked hard to create a strong sense of community in their work, by emphasising the importance of connection and relationships. For example, young people involved in LYG highlighted having time for fun and socialising as a way of building bonds. MCL found that this sense of community helped young people to commit to sport and activity in the longer term. For LCP, too, the positive emphasis on networks, relationships and connection set the tone for the programme, leaving coaches feeling that they were supported and part of something larger.

Working in partnership

Most of the spotlight projects were rooted in partnership working, but with different ends in mind. In some cases, partners brought complementary things to the table, with some partners bringing profile and credibility, such as Nike's contribution to MCL, and the NBA's role in boosting the profile of LCP. Other partnerships, such as the three borough-based MCL coalitions, had a very different role. This place-based approach aims to strengthen and bring together local sports for development initiatives based in the same place to achieve greater collective impact through partnership.

Learning and adapting

All the spotlight projects have tried out new approaches, reviewed progress and modified what they do. LCP, for example, designed in a period for review and reflection between each cohort so the programme could evolve and improve over time. The LTA reviewed and radically changed their recruitment process after realising that the usual approach was failing to reach the young people they wished to attract. A willingness to abandon what is not working well and test out something different has been central to the approach.

Using resources to create capacity

Some of the spotlight projects were keen to highlight the central contribution that SU funding and expertise had made to their developments. Funding had been used to create capacity in the sector (for example by training coaches or hiring interns) and to embed developments and structures that would underpin a sustainable future (for example in MCL). Projects doubted whether this would have been possible without the resources from the Programme.

Making the most of synergies

Section 1 highlights some of the major sporting events that are taking place in London in the near future, all of which offer a potential platform to connect young people into sport. For example, London EmpowerHER was explicitly linked to the Women's Rugby World Cup. Finding hooks such as this on which to hang sports developments can be an important way to raise interest levels and boost participation.

Showcasing role models and figureheads

LCP and London EmpowerHER, for example, both worked with high profile sports people as contributors to events such as rugby festivals and launch events. In particular, role models who are both successful and importantly, relatable in terms of their life experiences and heritage, can have an important impact on young people. As one professional woman rugby player said to a group of women and girls at an London EmpowerHER rugby tournament – *'I used to be you!'* But it is not just high profile sports people who can be a positive influence. The Mayor of London also has a key role in supporting SU initiatives, for example by hosting or appearing at launch events.

London's iconic status

As a world city, London offers a rich supply of iconic locations and legendary sporting venues. These locations can themselves have a powerful influence on young people's feelings about sport and their place within it. For example, participants in LYG were delighted to be participating in sport at the Olympic Park, where their sporting heroes had previously competed. Others expressed pride that as part of their LYG role, they had visited venues such as Wembley and Twickenham. Young LCP basketball coaches at a launch event at New City Hall were amazed by the surroundings and felt valued just to be invited there. Locating events at venues of this kind can help young Londoners to feel a sense of pride, and to see themselves as part of something that matters.



4. Conclusions and looking forward to the next phase

4.1 About this section

This final section summarises the key impacts and lessons that together set the direction for the final year of Sport Unites as a time limited programme. It then goes on to suggest priorities and opportunities for the Programme's projects and partners, the GLA Sport Team and evaluation and learning partners.

While some projects are due to end over the next 12 months, many of the initiatives and opportunities that SU is made up of will continue, through the delivery and activities of organisations funded through this Programme.

4.2 Summary of progress and learning to date

Substantial progress has been made towards all five outcome areas and the overarching vision for Sport Unites.

Section 3 provides the detail on these achievements and how change has been brought about. The following points distil these into building blocks for the next phase and beyond.

Summary of progress and impacts

- Project specific and overall totals of participant numbers, including participation from target groups, has increased and grown over the lifetime of the Programme.
- There have been some promising examples of engagement with underserved young people including young disabled people, women and girls, young people from diverse communities, and young people who typically experience multiple barriers to participation.
- Coaches and mentors are forming lasting connections and positive relationships with the young people they engage through sport; and the numbers of coaches and mentors trained through Sport Unites is impressive
- Internships and other pathways to progress through sport and take up leadership roles are providing opportunities for young people to develop a wide range of skills and life lessons that are equipping them for higher education, employment and volunteering.

- These young people are also helping to make changes within the sector, as host organisations learn about what works in becoming more inclusive and welcoming of everyone.
- As a result of participating in SU developments, young people are both reporting and demonstrating that they are more confident and resilient.
- Friendships and connections forged through sport and opportunities opening up through participation are helping young people feel less isolated, more included, that they are valued and that they belong.
- These social networks, alongside opportunities provided through SU, have contributed to a stronger sense of community among the young people taking part.
- Some examples exist of young people feeling safer through the experiences provided by SU projects. Projects are helping to create more safe spaces for young people across London. The SU Spotlights have highlighted some of the factors that help young people to feel safe. The key message is to listen carefully to what young people say makes them feel safe and what would make them feel safer.
- All 33 London Boroughs are involved in and/or touched by Sport Unites activities and initiatives in some way; some more than others and provision varies within boroughs, but opportunities are available across the city. The patchwork nature of provision can be improved through building on existing partnerships, synergies and shared agendas for change and by developing new partnerships that extend beyond sport and physical activity.
- The question of ‘what works?’ can be distilled as:
 - A focus on relationships and relational ways of working and engaging;
 - A mix of targeted and informal approaches;
 - Having a wide and diverse range of offers and opportunities;
 - Progression pathways into, through and beyond specific opportunities and projects including into higher education and paid employment;
 - Listening to and harnessing the voices, contributions and lived experience of young people, who are altruistic and committed to their own personal growth and that of other young people;
 - The importance of role models, coaches and mentors at an individual level and working collaboratively in partnership within and across sectors at a team and organisational and community level.
- Every development that has happened under the umbrella of Sport Unites has happened because of the investment of financial, human and capital resources. These resources have resulted in new posts and roles, new and/or enhanced skills, forums and platforms for a stronger youth voice, inclusive, safe and accessible facilities and equipment, new opportunities linked to pathways and packages of support that extend beyond an event or training session, knowledge and learning and new or strengthened partnerships. There is one year remaining of the Programme, during which the durability and sustainability of these new opportunities (etc) need to be established and their future secured.

4.3 What does this mean for the future of community sport? What next for projects and partners?

Projects and funded organisations

- Focus on securing resources to continue and sustain opportunities for local communities and underserved young people in particular
- Learn from peers across projects in order to collaborate rather than compete, especially for scarce and limited resources
- Linked to the above, pool knowledge and share learning about what works so that resources can be targeted and barriers to participation addressed
- Continue to focus on women and girls and other underserved young people, such as disabled young people, learning from projects who are doing well in reaching and engaging young people who face multiple barriers to participation
- Improve young people's sense of safety in partnership with organisations and projects that focus on community safety and community development, schools and local authorities
- Continue to focus on and strengthen as well as expand young people's voice, influence and leadership
- Promote opportunities using a range of ways, including social media, so that young people don't have to rely on word of mouth or stumbling across opportunities
- Capture and share young people's achievements, contributions and priorities through stories
- Share your evidence of what works with the GLA Sport Team and the wider community sport sector, and partners who share your ambitions (including schools, colleges, community organisations and other sport providers).

GLA Sport Team

- Work with sport and civil society teams in a range of organisations to help provide a joined up resource for those who provide/deliver sport for development opportunities to young people in London
- Promote the learning and evidence captured so far, which will help to profile the successes and impacts of projects and the programme
- Promote the evidence and learning framework so that projects and partners know how to measure, track, capture and share their impact
- Support work that targets women and girls and other underserved young people
- Continue to deepen understanding of safety and what helps to make young people feel safe
- Continue to encourage, promote and find ways of sharing evidence of what works and lessons about overcoming challenges, between projects and funded organisations and also with the network of project and programme evaluators.

NDTi's Evaluation & Learning Team

- Continue to highlight the personal stories and voices of young people participating in and contributing to community sport projects funded as part of Go! London from 2025 onwards
- Carry out more spotlight studies, including following up the continuing progress of the five projects featured in this report
- Map out the entire history and timeline of SU to describe the evolution of the programme from the beginning of Phase 1 to the completion of Phase 2, highlighting the lessons that have emerged along the way that can inform the next era of community sport in London
- Draw all learning and evidence together to build a clear narrative of what works for whom, how and why so this can be continued beyond 2026
- Capturing all this in a final report to the GLA Sport Team, to inform future community sport developments in London.





Appendix 1. Phase 2 Vision and Outcomes Framework



Sport Unites Outcomes & Evidence August 23



Vision: Young people in London have better lives, greater opportunities and more hopeful futures through taking part in sport and physical activity.

Draft new outcomes: These are the short-medium term changes that will result from SU activities (steps towards the longer term Vision)	SU existing outcomes	Signs of change: How will we know we are being successful, that each of these changes is happening, and working well?	Sources of evidence: What information / data will tell us if these things are happening? What needs to be collected, when, by whom? Do you have it or do we need to generate it?	Notes and questions
<p>1. Young people feel empowered, resilient, in control of their lives and know they have a voice</p>	<p>Improving people's mental health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Young People: can cope with challenges and bounce back when things are tough can talk about their experiences to trusted people are having positive conversations about the future are more confident in speaking out feel their voice is heard and changes are made as a result. have better relationships at home</p>	<p>Engagement in education (schools data) Referrals to other agencies (Ditto) Observation/stories during project.</p>	<p>There's a distinction between 'feeling' in control or 'are' in control. Control itself, how to phrase this?</p>
<p>2. Young people are connected, and have a sense of belonging</p>	<p>Decreasing isolation and strengthening connections</p>	<p>Increased and more frequent participation in activity High levels of engagement and retention in projects More time outside house and positive interactions Engagement in other projects because of interactions they've had. Increased levels of trust in community and in authority figures in community.</p>	<p>Project activity info Observations on engagement and interaction Longitudinal and case study insights - what else, so what, what next? Mentoring, pastoral support, baselines</p>	<p>Clarify connected to what and how.</p>

Draft new outcomes: These are the short-medium term changes that will result from SU activities (steps towards the longer term Vision)	SU existing outcomes	Signs of change: How will we know we are being successful, that each of these changes is happening, and working well?	Sources of evidence: What information / data will tell us if these things are happening? What needs to be collected, when, by whom? Do you have it or do we need to generate it?	Notes and questions
3. Young people feel safe, within their local communities and within London	Supporting young people affected by violence	Young people feeling safe Decreasing serious youth violence More engagement in sports and better choices, Fewer violent incidents Young people have more and safer options at a local level Young people are better informed so are able to make better choices Young people are changing their behaviour because they feel safer Whole system is created with young people's safety in mind	Data on youth crime and violence Current data that tracks localised delivery within boroughs Young peoples' perceptions	Have to consider capacity for change Safer options include travel, youth spaces, what can GLA do to influence policy and practice. .
4. The most inactive and excluded children and young people, and those at risk of inactivity, are becoming more active	The most inactive people are becoming more active	More opportunities for being or becoming active, particularly in the areas where young people are at highest risk Greater availability of green spaces and safe places, trusted adults Barriers are being removed for those most at risk	Local evidence at ward and borough level to track reduction of those most at risk, including health inequalities GLA city intelligence unit data. Previous research evidence Views and experiences of families as well as young people	Focus on prevention is key Ensure measuring the change in the system not outputs especially volume measures. How to capture system change?
5. Highly skilled staff are delivering this work in appropriate and accessible spaces, and organisations are working together in a	Workforce and organisational development Infrastructure and systems	More people accessing training and reporting this is improving quality of their work There is a suite of development options to help upskill the workforce	Training providers for SU projects data on courses attended and evaluation findings – returning to people that have participated 1 yr post to see if implementing (need to be generated)	

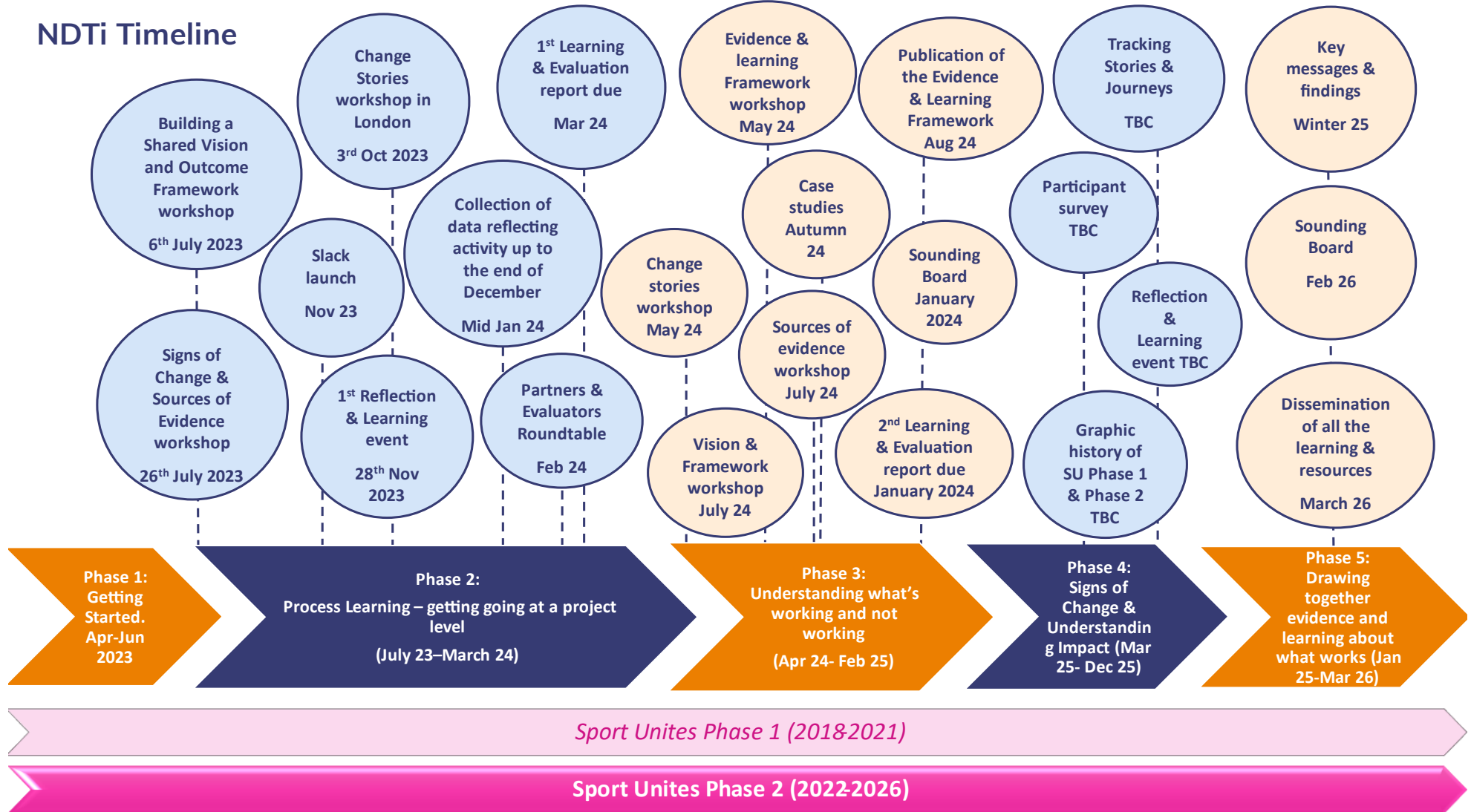
Draft new outcomes: These are the short-medium term changes that will result from SU activities (steps towards the longer term Vision)	SU existing outcomes	Signs of change: How will we know we are being successful, that each of these changes is happening, and working well?	Sources of evidence: What information / data will tell us if these things are happening? What needs to be collected, when, by whom? Do you have it or do we need to generate it?	Notes and questions
climate that values and promotes sport and physical activity		<p>Organisations in the sector are working collaboratively to provide a wide range of tailored opportunities that draws on the expertise of different organisations and responds to the needs of young people</p> <p>Increased access to facilities for community organisations so they can deliver their activities in appropriate places.</p> <p>Young people feel supported by sport professionals.</p>	<p>Number of organisations in SU engaging in a network Number that are working on partnership projects on SU Number of joint bids and projects</p> <p>Reduced number of SU orgs reporting issues of access/cost/barriers to delivery</p>	





Appendix 2. Sport Unites Phase 2 Timeline

NDTi Timeline





Appendix 3. The key findings and themes identified in our first evaluation and learning report

- Young people and children are **feeling more confident as they learn new skills** and successfully deal with new people and situations.
- Sport and activity sessions are providing a place to **leave everyday issues and worries behind**, and to improve young people's mental health.
- **Role models, coaches and mentors** are playing a crucial role in supporting young people and boosting their self-belief.
- **Young people are starting to shape and influence Sport Unite projects**, through a range of new structures, groups and ways of working.
- Through Sport Unites, young people are having fun and enriching **new experiences and meeting new people**.
- Increased confidence means that young people are behaving with **greater independence and agency**, for example by travelling around London and trying new things.
- Participants are feeling a **sense of community and connection** through Sport Unites that they describe as being like a family.
- Sport Unites is bringing young people together who would not previously have met, **widening horizons and building bridges**.
- Young people are learning **coping strategies and techniques for dealing with issues and problems**.
- Sport Unites projects are providing **support and continuity** at difficult times in the lives of young people, such as during the move from primary to secondary school.
- **Excluded young people, for example young people who live in underserved communities, or disabled young people, are having positive experiences** that would otherwise not been available to them.
- Sport Unites projects are making progress towards **reaching the most excluded young people** and expanding the range of opportunities they can access.
- Some projects are finding it challenging to attract the expected numbers of **women and girls** and have plans to tackle this.
- Sport Unites developments are **encouraging large numbers of young people into the sector**, to train as coaches or to explore their career options, boosting young peoples' employment prospects, as well as increasing capacity in the sport sector workforce in London.
- **New and valued partnerships** are emerging across London because of the Sport Unites Programme.



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