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Everton
in the Community

Developing Communities

Breathing Space and Safe Hands @41 Goodison Road

Final Report

January 2019

Dr Steven Lucas
Dr Lucy Hanson

Liverpool Hope University
SEARCH



THE
PEOPLE'S
CLUB

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Dr Steven Lucas
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CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction	8
2. Methodology	10
3. Context	12
Youth Justice and Youth at Risk	12
Sport and Youth Work	13
4. Findings	15
Self Reported Outcomes	15
Improved Confidence and Self Esteem	15
Physical Activity and Mental Health	15
Improving Skills	16
Wider Community	17
5. Staff Focus Groups	18
Home and Family	18
6. Interviews with Service Users	21
Life Experiences	22
Engaging with the Programme	22
Staff Support and Personal Goals	22
Sport and Activities Programme	23
The Everton Badge	24
The Everton Family	24
7. Referring Agencies	26
Referral Process	26
Outcomes	27
Strengths and Limitations	27
8. Case Studies	29
9. Discussion	33
Programme Theory	33
Quick Take-up and Early Engagement with Referrals	34
Physical Activity	35
Certificated Skills Work	35
One to One Mentoring and Personal Planning	35
Social Climate – Family, Acceptance and Belonging	36
The Everton Badge	37
The Model of Practice Mechanisms and Programme Theories	37
10. Conclusion	39
11. Recommendations	40
12. References	41

BREATHING SPACE AND SAFE HANDS @41 GOODISON ROAD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The youth project @41 Goodison Road represents the bringing together of two programmes which have been offering a service to young people in Merseyside under the auspices of Everton Football Club's community development programme, Everton in the Community (EitC). These projects now united as @41 Goodison Road combine the youth justice focus, on young people aged 10 to 19 at risk of custody, with an offer to young people aged 10 to 19 at risk of becoming looked after by local authorities.

Evaluation

This evaluation is the result of a collaborative approach between researchers from the Socio-Economic and Applied Research for Change (SEARCH) centre at Liverpool Hope University and EitC project managers. Through initial discussions about what kind of evaluation could meet their needs, it was agreed that the researchers' and the staff concerns would be best served by evaluating the project model of practice and adopting a programme theory approach. This was to involve looking at the process or mechanisms of the programme and how it engages with young people. Staff had a positive perspective already as to what qualitative changes and benefits they were seeing from the young people coming through the programme. This research offers a critical framework for such perspectives by providing rigorous analysis of the process and consideration of service user perspectives on a range of issues around the programme itself and their relationships with other agencies in general.

Evaluation of the programme as a process offers a perspective on the mechanisms through which staff and the programme engaged with young people and can identify essential characteristics of the programme model. Researchers thus adopted a 'critical friend' role in seeking to explore the work of the project in collaboration with staff and service users. It includes examining existing internal progress reports and qualitative data from staff, referring agencies and young service users generated by the research process itself.

Key Findings

The key programme mechanisms for supporting young people can be summarised under the following headings.

1. A social climate centred on the house characterised as that of – family, acceptance and belonging

A key plank of the programme identified clearly by staff and young people suggests that, for those young people committing themselves to the programme, the ethos of the house was a key factor sustaining their engagement. The sense of acceptance and belonging expressed by these young people represented a mutual recognition of value and respect. This respect is a key ingredient of successful youth work programming.

2. Quick take up and persistence in early engagement with young people referred

Staff and referrers offered strong support for this as a means of valuing and respecting young people's need for a reliable and personal response, especially where there are often entrenched problems brought about by lack of trust and poor relationships with authority figures and other key figures in young people's formal and informal networks. Frequent contact at an early stage and persistence when smooth progress is hindered by setbacks was mentioned by staff, young people and referring agencies. This offers a means of responding to the characteristics of a target group of young people who have experienced exclusion and find it difficult to trust that professionals and services will be able or willing to sustain an interest in them.

3. One to one mentoring and personal planning

This is a key mechanism for the @41 Goodison Road programme. Staff engagement and mentoring of young people through a process of self assessment and personal goal setting was a key part of the programme for all stakeholders consulted. Mentoring towards realistic personal goals is particularly fundamental for working with this target group of at risk young people, often facing multiple vulnerabilities in their personal relationships, their mental health, their education and work outlook. Problems associated with mental wellbeing were a key priority for the young people interviewed. A personalised programme designed in partnership with a trusted key worker was important for young people and also emphasised by staff.

4. Physical Activity

The programme uses physical activity to engage young people and to encourage personal goals in relation to better physical and mental wellbeing. There are difficulties in isolating programme effects in relation to physical activity but it is recognised that they have a key place in the project as a vehicle for staff engagement with young people as a daily part of the programme. Some young people interviewed were ambivalent about sport in terms of their own participation, even if they were fans of Everton Football Club, but nonetheless saw it as a positive offer for others and understood its role in the programme. Project reports generally indicate a high engagement in some kind of physical activity within the programme.

5. Certificated skills work

The data from young people's interviews indicated those young people had made significant gains on self confidence and self esteem. As a way of measuring development towards skills based goals, certification offers a framework for improving individual profiles particularly where employment and training is important for future plans young people are pursuing, but also in respect of other personal and social development goals.

6. The Everton Badge

It is important to consider the role of the 'Everton Badge' and the 'Everton family' as an enabling mechanism of the programme. Staff and young people who took part in the research made frequent reference to this as a unifying idea. Some young people came to the project from the Everton Free School and went on to other projects for work or training opportunities emphasising the wider context of the EitC social programme.

@41 Goodison Road project can be identified as a Plus Sports Model where the Football Club acts as a key attraction to young people, bringing a degree of glamour and credibility to the programme by association with the English Premier League. In addition, Everton Football Club allows young people to engage and avoid some of the perceived stigma associated with mainstream programming, particularly in the mental health and social support domain, while offering a network of associated projects in training and education.

Researchers found key areas of agreement between staff and young people about these positive characteristics defining the model of practice for the project. These are aspects of the programme most valued by young people and referring agencies who were resoundingly positive about their experience of engaging with the project. Further to those essential elements of the programme at Goodison Road, researchers found other strengths in evidence. Staff articulated an understanding of the needs of the targeted participant group, their vulnerability and their potential. Experienced staff and management reflected positive youth work values offering respect and recognition for young people in trouble. Essential to this is a persistence and patient approach which avoids restrictive time limiting or other exclusionary practices. Staff identified closely with the project location and local community so there was a sense of belonging and care in staff relationships with participants which is supported with the physical space of the house at 41 Goodison Road.

This evaluation focused on learning about and reflecting the model of practice and theories of change back to staff and managers in a constructive way. It was not hard to do this in a positive constructive way as the data collected was very supportive of the programme from both staff and young people. There are limitations to what could be claimed from this approach which engaged a small number of the total group of young people who have gone through the project programme. The research has been a snapshot rather than a longitudinal study following young people over time. The evaluation cannot define longer term harder outcomes of the project on a range of young people over time. A larger study was beyond the time and resources available. As a general issue where programmes are funded from various short term sources evaluative reports present a challenge in aggregation of longer term outputs. Programme report timescales and key outcomes recorded reflect the different demands of funders over time. In this case as one of the recommendations outlined below we recommend a set of criteria determined by the programme managers to run independently of funders reports and timescales. This would allow a longer lens to become productive of data over years as the project and service users themselves mature.

Recommendations

1. The project has a strong youth work value base which combines the 'Everton Family' offer with the house environment creating a social climate and 'relationship space' which was clearly valued by staff and service users that were interviewed. We recommend that the project continue to develop this approach and use it as a key part of the offer to young people and referring agencies.

2. The project evaluation underlined the strengths of the programme both in terms of the model of practice they have evolved but also in terms of the committed staff group that has been assembled. It is important to recognise that the success of a programme relates fundamentally to those working relationships, knowledge, skills and values that are supported and nurtured within the organisation. We recommend that @41 Goodison Road maintain this focus on the key elements of the programme relating to the social climate and relationship-based offer which service users identified as a key point of positive appraisal.
3. We have developed a figurative model of the project offer to referring agencies and young people who may become service users. We recommend that the project either develop this graphic model or design another one which can set out their offer and provide a visually engaging statement based on the Plus Sports Youth Work model.
4. While the two projects are moving together into one for management purposes there is still some difficulty in easily monitoring performance due to reporting arrangements for funders. Accordingly, we would recommend that the projects move to a single format for monitoring unified project key performance indicators which can offer a clear set of general criteria which will be unaffected by funders requirements.



1. INTRODUCTION – SCOPE OF ANALYSIS

This evaluation of @41 Goodison Road represents one strand of a collaboration between Everton in the Community (EitC) and the Socio-Economic and Applied Research for Change (SEARCH) centre at Liverpool Hope University, which has been engaged in evaluating a range of EitC projects since 2017. Interim findings were presented at a SEARCH conference on 6th June 2018 at Liverpool Hope University where staff and researchers joined together in explaining some of the issues being addressed. This report focuses on the work conducted at Goodison Road.



The project known as @41 Goodison Road is a youth project offered to young people aged 10-19 years old in the Merseyside area. Comprising two projects recently combined, Breathing Space and Safe Hands, the project works with young people in or at risk of custody or facing significant social exclusion.

The project offers broad aims:

1. Developing confidence and self esteem
2. Improving health and well being
3. Providing pathways into education, training and employment.

Safe Hands was originally focused on youth who were in custody with the condition that the young person must be within 9 months of release. Safe Hands staff would visit the young person in custody and support them upon their release. Safe Hands has now developed to work with young people in the community who have Youth Offending involvement.

Breathing Space provides support to young people with a variety of social needs and aims to support individuals and families who may be at risk of entering local authority care.

The two programmes operate from one physical location with staff also working across the two projects. This evaluation focuses on both programmes and therefore mainly discusses them as @41 Goodison Road, which staff offered as a combined project name.

Projects are structured along the theme of a football club's annual cycle. Intervention begins with a 'Pre-Season' stage that involves a 1:1 mentoring process. As well as building relationships with staff, young people identify personal goals (including preparation for release if they are in custody). 'Mid-Season' intervention involves a programme of individual and groupwork, again tailored towards individual needs. This can include alternative education provision. Finally, 'End of Season' offers individuals the opportunity to access new education, training and employment and possible peer mentoring roles while staff continue to support young people towards independence from the project.

The findings section includes some discussion around the funders reports prepared historically by the two projects followed by analysis of primary data in the form of a staff focus group and interviews with young people who have been part of the project. This section includes two case studies of participants.

The final discussion section draws together the data on the key programme mechanisms identified from staff discussions and project documentation with data from participants and referrers. The strengths of the @41 Goodison Road project are assessed leading to a model of practice derived from work carried out by other leading proponents of youth and engagement evaluatory frameworks².

Structure of the report

The report begins by discussing methodological decisions taken and explored during the evaluation process. It is centred on the use of a 'realist' evaluation model¹ which gathers data from staff and service users to consider the 'programme theory of change' and the mechanisms of practice which guide the programme in action.

¹ Developed by Pawson and Tilley (1997; 2004), Realist Evaluation is rooted in asking the fundamental question: 'What works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects, and how?' It is rooted in evaluating programmes through understanding that any intervention is based on an initial theory of a problem and how it may be solved, that programmes are embedded in existing social systems, that effects are the result of active engagement by stakeholders, and that they are open systems that can be effected by and can have an effect on externalities beyond the specific defined by the intervention.

² It brings together Coalter's (2013) extensive programme theory based approach to evaluation of sport for development projects and Witt & Compton's (1996) 'protective factors framework'

2. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of youth work has struggled to assert itself in the evidence based marketized world of corporate, neo-liberal Britain³. Evaluation research, whilst seeking to demonstrate the immediate outcome measures demanded by funders, can often miss the important detail around the mechanics of how in a particular context with young people, longer term life changes and social competencies may be produced and sustained⁴.

This evaluation has adopted a 'realistic' or 'programme theory' evaluation approach⁵. This approach is interested in how staff and service users are stakeholders who, in a complex myriad of decisions and actions, 'make' programmes work or fail. It is not the programme which does the work but the engagement of people who are part of it. Successful programmes will provide the reasons and the resources to enable service users to change should they so choose. The evaluator tries to understand what the conditions are which allows the programme to work and how this is brought about by stakeholders, staff and service users.

Such an approach utilises a three-fold typology of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes that attempts to answer questions such as:

- What are the important constraints and possibilities of social context and how do they configure the problems which the programme seeks to address?
- How does the programme enact mechanisms, as forms of social practice, which can support the service users to reach the outcomes and goals they are set as stakeholders? For example, how does the project offer a means of moving forward from a position of poverty, exclusion, stigma and other forms of social capital towards an improvement in economic prospects and greater social integration for young people who come through the door.

- What are the outcomes that form the target for engagement with service users and does the process offer a coherent theory and practice towards achieving them?

To this end the researchers have engaged with staff and service users to explore what the programme theory of change is. Discussions were aimed at understanding how young people as participants make sense of where they are coming from, where they are going and what the enabling factors have been to help them get there. Case histories provided by staff and young people as well as examples which form sections of annual reports to funders were examined. Which activities cited as important processes and principles within the daily round of the programme activity were discussed with referring agencies, staff and young people. The aim has been to seek the connection between how stakeholders think about the job at hand and what they do to engage young people in that vision of a possible future that they can call their own.

Research Design and Methods

The evaluation is determined by a qualitative approach that seeks to critically analyse data generated through formal and informal interviews and discussions between stakeholders and the research team alongside observations made during programme sessions. There are limitations to

³ See de St Croix (2018)

⁴ See for example, Tacon (2007); Coalter (2007b); Pawson & Tilley (1997; 2004)

⁵ Pawson & Tilley (1997; 2004)

such an approach related to interpretation, objectivity and truth. In such circumstances, it must be recognised that the validity of this work is reinforced through triangulating the data amongst various stakeholders and researchers' own expertise and field observations so that evidence is corroborated, subject to internal verification and authentic to the contexts through which it is being generated – criteria more appropriate to undertaking research of this kind⁶.

Data was generated through the following:

- Two focus groups with staff
- Five telephone interviews with referring agency staff
- Eight interviews with young people involved in the project
- Two interviews with former participants who are now members of staff
- Analysis of project annual reports and funding reports dating back to the beginnings of the Breathing Space and Safe Hands projects
- One telephone interview with Social Justice charity, Nacro
- Observation of a group workshop
- Observation of a group outing
- Informal observations and discussions with staff and young people in the 41 Goodison Road house

All data collection and analysis was conducted by the staff at Liverpool Hope University, and approved by Liverpool Hope University research ethics committee. Interviews with staff and participants were conducted within Everton in the Community premises or at Everton Football Club. Interviews lasted between 20 and 60 minutes depending on participants. All interviews were conducted after informed consent was granted, including parents/guardians of young people interviewed who were under 18 years old.

⁶ For a comparative discussion of conventional forms of research rooted in the methods of natural science versus approaches more appropriate to contemporary social contexts see Denzin & Lincoln (2017)

3. CONTEXT

The project @41 Goodison Road works with what are most commonly termed 'high risk' youth. Young people referred to the programme are often facing issues such as educational exclusion, difficult family relationships and concerns with mental health. Others have experienced prison or local authority care. Work with the most socially disengaged and vulnerable groups presents enormous challenges as this group are often the hardest for the agencies of social welfare and education to engage and also tend to be the most stigmatised.

Youth Justice and Youth at risk

Nationally while the numbers of children and young people in care have been rising over the last decade⁷ the numbers in custody are falling. In Greater Merseyside there are over 1,000 children and young people coming into care every year. Liverpool alone has a rate of 122 per 10,000 young people, twice the national average. The Wirral, Sefton, Halton and Knowsley are not far behind and all well above the national average. Child welfare inequalities are stark across the UK and recent research has underlined the strength of the correlation between poverty and deprivation in communities and the risk of young people being the subject of care proceedings⁸. Merseyside, and particularly Liverpool, Knowsley and Halton are amongst the highest nationally for the indices of multiple deprivation.

But while the numbers of young people in secure custody are falling the problems of resettlement back into the community for this group have become more intractable. In the North West region that means a reduction from approximately 400 young people in 2010 to a little over 100 now⁹. Against the background of the pressures brought about by a social policy of austerity, and reductions in local authority budgets, supporting young people in the community has become a

greater challenge. Young people in custody now represent a cohort with significantly higher representation of problems in respect of family breakdown, homelessness or unstable living situations, drug and alcohol issues, disrupted education, employment training, poor relationships, and mental health issues. All the things that challenge resettlement after custody. This also makes the problems that young people encounter in prisons more serious in line with the greater concentration of young people with severe problems and issues across the board. For example, within Young Offender Institutions there are marked increases in violence, self-harming and use of physical restraint on young people.

In addition, while the population of offenders in custody has declined with new strategies from government and the judicial system, the re-offending rates for young people leaving custody remained stubbornly high at over 40% as compared to less than 30% for adults. It is also of note that in terms of BAME the over-representation amongst the population in custody has remained steady to the extent that there has been more limited reduction in custody rates for these groups. It follows that services for resettlement of offenders need to be able to deal with a range of complex personal and social issues requiring a personalised response while involving multiple service agencies and engaging the personal trust and motivation of the young people¹⁰.

⁷ Department of Education (2018)

⁸ Bywaters *et al.* (2014)

⁹ HMPPS (2018)

¹⁰ Bateman *et al.* (2017)

Literature reviewing and evaluating resettlement services tends to underline the importance of services which are able to offer a convincing personal engagement with young people. Not just addressing the offending behaviour but also the complex background of troublesome and dynamic personal factors of young people who become incarcerated. Reviews of resettlement issues also underline the need for planning for release to begin as soon as young people begin their sentence¹¹.

It can be seen clearly that while incarceration is likely to intensify any personal and family relationship issues or wider community issues that young people may have had prior to incarceration, particularly in terms of accommodation and/or employment and training, there are strong arguments to suggest that help directed at resettlement for young people who are released from custody might well be extended to those young people at risk of future custody.

This is the strength of the approach @41 Goodison Road where the two projects have merged into one programme addressing support to those at risk and those facing release from custody back into the community. When this resettlement issue is placed in the wider context of the limited resources and challenging economic and social context of Greater Merseyside then this can only add to the challenges of resettlement.

Sport and Youth Work

Being affiliated to Everton Football Club means that sport plays an important role in the work that goes on @41 Goodison Road. The walls of the football club's Goodison Park stadium towering directly across the road from the house feature an elevated giant mural depicting icons of Everton's football history. This cannot fail to leave an impression on any visitor to the project. Staff and some young participants also wear an EitC tracksuit kit. However, one question this report asks is, 'What has football got to do with it?' One

immediate qualification is that the programme @41 Goodison Road lists a number of sports and outdoor pursuits activities, both team games and more individual challenges such as rock climbing. So, it is the role of sports and activities which needs to be dealt with both at the level of programme theory and in terms of the data gathered from staff and young people as participants of the project.

The question of the role of sport in youth work and the discussion over how and what kind of impact sport can have, needs to be dealt with. The idea that sport changes lives is a powerful idea and it has had an important role in government policy both past and present¹².

Commonly attributed benefits associated with sport are as follows¹³:

- physical fitness and improved health
- improved mental health and psychological well-being, leading to the reduction of anxiety and stress.
- personality development via improved self-concept, physical and global self-esteem/confidence, self-confidence and increased locus of control.
- socio-psychological benefits such as empathy, integrity, tolerance, cooperation, trustworthiness and the development of social skills.
- broader sociological impacts such as increased community identity, social coherence and integration (collectively referred to as social capital).

The trouble is that the evidence from evaluation of programmes is that it is not possible to grant sport the powerful causal impact in this simple analysis. There are just too many other important qualifications to any social programme or intervention. Which kind of sport works with which group of people under which conditions? Too many variations on a theme of team work and self discipline, or role modelling and social capital. Too many successes and too many failures. It is not the intention to review this material here and there are other more recent investigations around the idea of sport as unique source of

¹¹ See for example: Hazel (2015); Bateman & Hazel (2013); Hazel *et al.* (2012); Gray *et al.* (2018)

¹² See for example: Henry (2001);

¹³ Coalter (2007a)

social change in and of itself¹⁴. However, it is clear that it is indeed a problem to suggest that we can attribute the success or failure of any programme to the use of sport. It would in fact be a dis-service to the staff and users of the programme not to acknowledge that it is not the programme content that does the hard work but it is the staff and the programme participants who together make a success or otherwise of the programme aims and outcomes. This is not to suggest that sport does not play a role in what goes on or that it is not a positive and enduring feature of any programme. However, the wider evidence from evaluation literature does not allow us to regard sport as a magic bullet producing far reaching physical, mental and social effects. Sport in itself should not mask the complex set of relationships and practices which underlie any social programme or institution. To allow the idea of sport as the cause of programme impacts in and of itself denies the opportunity for a realistic appraisal of programme mechanisms, successes and failures – in other words the process of the work itself.

The goal of this research has been to consider activity and outcomes with a programme theory approach. What is of interest is how staff and users of the programme @41 Goodison Road make sense of change and success and through which means they have pursued these goals. In this way it is possible to understand how the programme can make an impact on service users lives rather than importing readymade assumptions around the influence of sport.

Key to this is the adoption of a framework for understanding the relationship between sport and social intervention programmes that categorises them into one of three models: 'Sports', 'Sports Plus' and 'Plus Sports'¹⁵.

- 'Sports' Programmes are those where the intervention is sport focused and 'coaching' is around sporting participation. Many youth sports programmes will follow this model where there are open and non-targeted programmes engaging young people.

- The 'Sports Plus' model takes in those programmes where there is in addition to the central focus on sport, additional aims and goals around coaching and mentoring for employment or education and life skills in its widest understanding. Here the relationships between the coaching staff and service users are enhanced by an 'off the pitch' focus on life coaching and programme aims for the individual. On a continuum between coaching and mentoring we are now moving towards the mentoring and befriending end with more emphasis on building relationships of trust and respect outside of the sport itself.
- Finally, 'Plus Sport', where the focus is more squarely on a targeted youth work group and sport is used as an incentive, a motivator and perhaps a reward to enhance a programme focus on social and individual goals from employment, physical health and life skills planning and outcomes.

The placing of @41 Goodison Road within this paradigm is not crucial but should be positioned towards the 'Plus Sport' end. What is useful to consider are the features of such programmes which have some association with success in programme evaluations. Here the researchers have drawn on key variables underlying programme theories of change and impact from within available literature. These are factors which shift focus from the concerns and risks in young people's environments to the features of programmes which help build relationships and personal resources enhancing resilience and positive trajectories for young participants. The report explores the multiple axes of programme mechanisms engaging the staff relationships with the young people, the social climate offered in the project, the role of sport, features of the participant group and recruitment to the project and the outcomes the activity is directed towards.

The key focus for this research highlights the relationship between staff and service users in favour of respect, trust and reciprocity. This forms an important dynamic towards a closer individual mentoring relationship.

¹⁵ See Coalter (2013)

4. FINDINGS

This section of the report draws on analysis of project reports completed by the project manager for funding purposes. These reports were completed on annual or half-yearly cycles for the relevant funders, namely Comic Relief and the Premier League Community Fund.

Self-Reported Outcomes

This section of the report draws on analysis of project reports completed by the project manager for funding purposes. These reports were completed on annual or half-yearly cycles for the relevant funders, namely Comic Relief and the Premier League Community Fund.

The evaluation reported here, initially intended to draw on more quantitative data in these funding reports by outlining the number of participants achieving specific project outcomes. However, this data has proven to be difficult to aggregate. Firstly, the two core projects of Safe Hands and Breathing space each had their own reporting structures despite sharing project aims and project staff, but the targets and outcomes set were similar but not the same. Secondly, with different funders in place and also as the projects developed each year, the kinds of outcomes that the projects reported on also shifted over time making it difficult to collate data from one year to the next. Therefore, this section will focus on the outcomes achieved in the projects without reporting on the aggregated data.

Improved Confidence and Self Esteem

A key aspect to the @41 Goodison Road model is to provide each young person with their own mentor. When commencing a programme, the young person has a 1-to-1 consultation with a staff member to bring together an individual action plan in the form of a 'Participation Passport'. This document is used to formulate personal targets and

milestones, as well as the steps to achieve them. Importantly, the action plan is linked to realistic goals which the young person would like to achieve. Young people then continue to meet on a weekly basis with their support workers and reflect on their activities. A key aim of the 1-to-1 mentoring is to build self-esteem and personal confidence.

Staff measure change in self-esteem through outcome star assessment every 6-8 weeks, as well as reflective logs, evaluations and informal feedback. Staff also issue questionnaires at the beginning and throughout the service use to gather feedback on self-reported change. Similar methods of assessment are used for measuring change in confidence and raising aspirations. Staff use the variety of activities and strong relationships they have with participants to encourage young people to achieve things they previously thought would not be possible. The supportive and nurturing environment is used to motivate young people to achieve their goals. Staff also organise a range of activities that are aimed at boosting confidence and self-esteem through young people trying something new. Examples found include trampolining, Free Running (Parkour), BMX, museum visits and outdoor education such as hiking and bush craft.

Physical Activity and Mental Health

Apart from sport related qualifications, participants take part in a 6-8 week programme in the 'mid-season' which includes a key focus on health. Sessions are delivered on a weekly basis and are designed to be engaging to help keep young people focused and motivated. Over and above educational

sessions, groups undertake physical exercise twice a week. These vary to appeal to different interests and have included football, outdoor trekking, yoga or simply walking. The team have also devised a 6-week sports programme and a 6-week gym programme, which involves various sessions such as circuit training, weight training, kettle bells. Physical exercise is not just promoted due to the attachment of the football club, but is hoped to boost self-esteem, improved moods and improve sleep quality.

EitC specifically provide a set of Personal Social Health Emotional awareness workshops to meet the needs of young people. These are provided by EitC health department. The units covered include; Raising self esteem and self confidence; Resilience building; Improved physical health; Expressing emotions; Living and working productively; Feeling engaged with the world around you.

40 PSHE awareness workshops have been delivered to 14-19 year olds demonstrating 'risk taking behaviour'. These workshops covered the following topics:

- Managing emotions
- Self-worth and aspirational attainment
- What is sexual exploitation
- Keeping yourself safe on the internet
- What's a healthy relationship
- Social Action in your community
- Peer mentoring
- Who to go to in your community for help

Young people are able to access the EitC health portal activities. The health portal provides information for lifestyle behaviour covering the following areas; Physical Activity; Healthy Eating; Mental Health and Well-being; Smoking and Tobacco; Alcohol and Substance Misuse.

Improving Skills

Within the programmes, activities are arranged on a weekly basis designed to improve participants' skills. A key aim is to support participants in gaining accredited qualifications. There are a mixture of sport and non-sport related qualifications, including coaching qualifications, leadership awards, first aid, food hygiene, safeguarding, Level 2 peer mentoring, Level 1 Nicas Rock Climbing, Level 1 FA Girls Football Badge, National Citizenship Service, Customer Service Level 1, Level 1 Kayaking and Employability Level 1. EitC are a registered ASDAN centre¹⁶ and offer short courses on football, healthy living and citizenship. Other courses have been provided on safeguarding, disability delivery and health advocacy.

Where needed staff also provide individual or group work to support young people with regards to semi-independent living skills. Support has included cooking sessions, budgeting sessions and wider skills such as answering the phones and completing forms. This aims to give the young people their own responsibility helping them in their transition to adulthood. As the services are based in a house the programme also has use of its own kitchen giving everyone the opportunity to make their own lunch rather than buying fast foods or other unhealthy options.

@41 Goodison Road also supports young people to progress on to other programmes, education or employment. In the three years Breathing Space was funded by Comic Relief, 16 young people progressed into other EitC programmes including, Employability, Kicks and The Youth Zone. A further five were signposted to external programmes. Four were supported through further education and one moved on to university. Five participants found full time employment, six found part time work and three moved to further training. 17 young people completed the National Citizen Service and 37 participants accessed Intense Mentoring in education or

¹⁶ ASDAN is an education charity and awarding organisation whose curriculum programmes and qualifications help young people develop knowledge and skills for learning, work and life)

returning to education. A small number of participants have also completed traineeship programmes, gaining two QCF qualifications in Employability, Customer Service and Hospitality.

Participants are also encouraged to get involved with volunteer opportunities that are available across EitC more widely as well as those elsewhere in the community. One quarter of all sessions are in the community in order to help young people engage with their communities and challenge any low educational expectations. Volunteer experiences have included visiting care homes, supporting the homeless at Sisters of Mersey and a sponsored 5k run to support a charity of their choice.

Wider Community

Beyond the direct work with young people at the 41 Goodison Road site, programme staff also deliver workshops within educational provision around Merseyside. This includes single workshops or an 8-week programme, focusing on current issues young people are facing, such as, drug and alcohol use, choice and consequences and violence and crime. These workshops had reached 692 young people up to the end of 2017.

Staff also delivered sessions in one school to six young people attending a SPACE program (Supporting Pupil Achievement Combatting Exclusions). This aimed to re-integrate the young people into mainstream education after taking part in the program. A variety of workshops were developed and delivered in the EitC Community Hub, such as Drug and Alcohol Awareness, Stereotyping, Health and Wellbeing, as well as having guest speakers from EitC and Barclays. This part of the @41 Goodison Road programme can then assist more young people in their attendance and achievements in education.

The team has also delivered training to 47 members of staff within Everton in the Community. The first session was delivered to five members of the Kicks programme staff and the other session was delivered to 42 new members of staff from the National Citizen Service programme. The training was scenario based and looked at managing challenging behaviour, picking up on past issues or incidents that coaches/staff have faced. Bespoke training and awareness sessions have also been delivered to care home support staff, care workers, foster carers and school mentors on a variety of issues such as self-harm, mental resilience and health initiatives.

5. STAFF FOCUS GROUPS

Three staff focus groups were held at Goodison Road. The first group with six staff including the project manager focused on staff profiles and a discussion around the programme practice and theory. Staff, in a written exercise, identified their personal journeys bringing them to work on the project at Goodison Road. Staff on the project have a variety of backgrounds but all are experienced youth workers who have prior experience in either youth offending work or sports development work. Some staff not involved in this initial group are now employed as peer mentors and had been through the Safe Hands and Breathing Space Programmes as young participants.

The staff taking part in the first focus group spoke at length and shared post-it note statements around prompts asking about the characteristics of the project values and approach to the work with young people. This material provided a rich resource for analysis of the programme theory and the ethos of youth work @41 Goodison Road. The main themes are outlined below. These are then discussed further together with comparative material from data gathered from programme outcomes, service users and referring agencies.

Home and Family

Most of what follows in terms of the style and approach staff described can be placed under this theme of the special kind of space staff have created at Goodison Road. This was characterised as a homely and nurturing atmosphere.

One worker commented on the change they felt moving into the house at Goodison Road from their previous base within the club community resource – a more formal community hub resource used by many individuals and groups.

“... we can compare from when we used to be based there, to what we’re like in the house now and the difference is massive there. There’s basically young people walking in and they’re engaging with us

straight away, they’re asking for the toast, drinks, they go up, they just walk upstairs, they go in the room, they’re sitting down and playing with the PlayStation, there is like it’s a home, isn’t it? We’ve had a group from another programme come over last week to talk to us and they were sat there, like, oh my God, this is like a house then...”

The following exchange between two staff members offered the view that this move to the house had an impact on relationships and style of working which had evolved rather than been planned.

A. Yeah, I think it’s just evolved. I think obviously the idea, you know, when the club bought the house, we kind of didn’t know how it was going to work or pan out, we just...

B. I think we were just really excited to have our own space and our own kind of, like...

A. I think it’s then the staff what have then made it into what it is and the team, even like, we’ve had Mary for a few months and Mary’s been doing a lot of the, Mary’s come from the chefing background, so she’s done a lot of the cooking and the cleaning and making the lads’ lunches and you’ve took on that role in the house and the lads have really responded to that as well, like that being looked after.

B. At home, isn’t it?

A. Homeliness.

The opportunity of the house was felt by staff to facilitate an approach to engagement with the young service users starting from a notion of care which in turn is associated with home as space where relationships are informal and you don't have to behave in a formal or institutional manner. This is characterised as welcoming, a withholding of judgement, an acceptance of individuality, and starting with a clean slate.

"... I just think we've got to go and meet the young person and build from there, 'cause at the end of the day, it's the past, isn't it, I think it's a clean slate with us, when they come to us, I think that's what, I think with the environment that we set, I like to think that they feel welcome and they can have a fresh start with us."

"I think, for relationships to form and bonds to be made between the group, as well as the staff. I think it's just what sets aside (sic) everything in general on the programme is, you know, utilising the house for a young person to be there, it's their home, you know what I mean."

Staff characterised their approach to new referrals as being one of the clean slate as stated above and this was reflected in discussion about new referrals.

"So I've recently, I've been through the referral forms with L(manager) and we've had those things identified by the referring professional, you know what I mean, so sometimes it's like, right, we, want, be great if a young person could improve on this, this and this, so some young people are coming through with, like, all those targets set for them, but then the way we approach that would be to kind of work with the young person to set goals for themselves."

There was a concern that hearing too much about a young person's problems could encourage a pre-judgment of that young person which could form a barrier to the engagement with that young person's own agenda. But staff agreed that although they wanted to engage with young people in

setting and committing to their own goals and targets they also appreciated some dialogue with referring agencies about their reasoning being the referral and their idea of problem areas for the young person.

"Whereas sometimes, we just get a referral that has nothing on, you're kind of like, well, what is the reason for this referral. A part of that was us changing our referral form and putting on our outcomes, so we can at least have a guide, is it for education, training, employment, is it just for something, you know, the social aspect, a young person getting out there and meeting new friends, so I think we've adapted that and that referral you got the other day was really good, wasn't it..."

The picture emerging from the staff discussion around how they characterised their model of practice as a homelike environment included an important sense of belonging which extended beyond an immediate sense of being part of the programme in a formal sense and went beyond, like family members who come back and visit. Examples were given of current peer mentoring staff who had been through the programme as young people, or young people who had gone onto the Everton employability project and become employed elsewhere within the Everton group. Indeed, this movement through the other EitC programmes forms an important practical implication of the idea of the Everton Family as reflected in the wider Everton in the Community presentation of values and principles.

The role of the Everton Club, the close working relationship with other EitC programmes, and the family ethos of the club, was regarded as important to staff and was a strong theme running through the focus group discussions.

Two final comments from staff capture this theme of loyalty to the Everton family.

"I think when you're taken on at Everton, they always say, you know, it is a bit cheesy and they say, you know, the Everton family, the Everton way and I think if you don't live by that then you shouldn't work here, 'cause you're privileged to work here and be a part of it. I think the young people, when they've been a part of it and they've put the kit on, they're a part of something then."

So, the sense of belonging and loyalty and pride was not confined to the microcosm of the house at 41 Goodison Road but reflected a larger sense of an Everton family and underlying values which were to appear as a theme throughout the data collected.

"Yeah, course it is, like, I mean, even before the house really, it was, the work we're doing, sometimes we're the only like constant people in these young people's lives and all the time the relationships we've built up with them, you've kind of, some have come to, like, rely heavily on us and you know, we've supported them with things like getting food in and taking them to different places. We've kind of maybe acted as that, like, family member at times and they've probably saw us as kind of a, I mean, they're always speaking, like, about the Everton family and particularly within the community, the community ethos and we just try to kind of, to follow that really, you know, we're here for the young person, regardless of what's going on in their life..."

In the discussion below the report will return to these themes to the extent they represent a programme theory of change identified by staff which can be part of the analysis of how the project works to achieve outcomes for service users. Before we turn to this discussion it is important to examine the data from other sources and consider the particular views and experiences of the young people who have been involved in the programme.

This work has given the opportunity to look for difference or agreement from stakeholders across the board and move closer to an evaluation of the extent to which there is a common approach to the work of the project allowing staff and service users to work together in achieving goals and outcomes.

6. INTERVIEWS WITH SERVICE USERS

This section of the report discusses the data from service users. There were two interviews with young people who had been involved in the programmes and in one case had moved onto paid employment as a peer mentor within the project and in another case to employment in another Everton programme. There were interviews with another six young people currently involved in groups at Goodison Road. Two of the interviews were with female service users.

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It proved harder than initially conceived to recruit young people to interview. Time was spent initially with a group of young males informally as a precursor to seeking approval for some focus group work and perhaps project work engaging them as more active participants within the research process. However, this group came to a natural end with some members moving on to employment and others continuing as individuals. The opportunity for group work was lost during this period of relative instability although some of the original group were interviewed.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interviewing method. Young people were invited to expand on their own stories of how they had become involved with Goodison Road. They were asked about the different professional agencies they worked with, their family life, personal issues and troubles and how their involvement with Goodison Road had formed part of their story. They were also asked about working with the programme at Goodison Road, their relationships with staff, the house, and the Everton Football Club. For

the most part there was a strong response and an eagerness from the young people to tell their stories. The interviews themselves varied in length but averaged around one hour. The approach from the researchers was not to focus or expect a critical dialogue about the role of the project so much as to look for the kinds of stories the young people told, how they described the role of the project, and the staff within it, and how they felt that the project had impacted their lives as they passed through.

Already while conducting the interviews and later, when looking through the data from the young people afterwards, it became clear that there was much being echoed from the staff data. The interview data is organised under three main themes of, life experiences, project experiences and professional agency experiences with summaries of the key findings offered under those headings.

Life Experiences

The primary concern of young people in this area was their mental health closely followed by family and relationship issues. Violence, drugs and alcohol, offending and anti-social behaviour were strong secondary themes but the leading concerns from the young people, in making sense of their experience was around the former primary themes of relationships and mental health. Problems with education were also mentioned by all young people but this will be discussed below under professional agencies.

Two of the young people had been in care and two, one male and one female, had been in prison custody prior to involvement in the projects at Goodison Road. One other young person had been in hospital as an inpatient receiving treatment for a mental health issue and two others had diagnoses of autism and ADHD.

There were powerful stories around family relationship problems and the rehabilitation of those relationships and a sense of personal growth from the three young people who had been involved with Everton for a period of more than one year.

This group of young people do not represent a cross section of all young people who have been through the programme at Goodison Road and those who had been engaged the longest were also the most articulate, the most reflective about their experience, and the most positive about their experience with the project. So, although these young people do not represent those who may have felt unable to benefit from the offer at Goodison Road for any reason by examining their evidence there is much to consider about why they found the project worked for them. This interview data however can also offer a different kind of perspective on the previous recorded outcomes detailed above and the strengths of the model of practice.

Engaging with the Programme

At the beginning of any involvement is a period of engagement and young people tended to describe a process where they had to make a decision about whether they would fully engage with the project and take part or not. One young man was clear that after an initial period where he was lukewarm about the project it had been their determination to keep in touch with him when he was in custody that made him decide to make an equally determined effort to change his life.

"Yeah, so while I was on Breathing Space, that's when my offending took place, that's when I, even when I first went to Safe Hands, I did reoffend and I went back to custody, so that was obviously a bad start, so when I got out, I reoffended and ended up going back to custody, but Safe Hands supported me through it, they didn't give up, they didn't think, oh, he's come out and he's messed up again, they still stayed in contact, they still wanted me to engage, they wanted to be there and support me, they come up on regular visits to the prison..."

Another service user who has gone on to become a peer mentor also described a moment of making the choice to engage in a positive way with the project.

"Yeah, obviously, like, you know, I made it better for myself 'cause I wanted to, because I wanted to change my life, I wanted to get involved in as much positive stuff as I could, but I could have just, what I mean is, I could have just, you know, 'cause I was young at the time, I could have just said no, I'm not going to..."

Staff Support and Personal Goals

The reason these young people and others most commonly gave for why they decided to commit to the project was related to the staff. The earlier report from staff and the detail on the model of practice emphasises the commitment from staff to offer a homely and welcoming space for young people to develop a sense of belonging. Young people described relationships with staff as close, enduring and characterised by supportive mentoring. One factor here mentioned by young people was the work they undertook with staff to identify personal goals that had meaning for them.

"Like, Breathing Space helped me like mature, if that makes sense, so I knew what, like, 'cause they made me like set goals and stuff and before Breathing Space, I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do and now I know what I want to do

and now I know how to go about more things and stuff like that, so before I went on that, I was literally just, I wasn't bothered about anything, if that makes sense..."

*"Yeah, but like I think, I keep saying, oh, it's ***[key worker], but it's 'cause I knew him the longest, but he knows that, like, ever since I joined the free school, I've always wanted to go uni, always and even when I was in the free school, like, I really struggled with my Maths, but I'd always stay behind and ask for help with my Maths, 'cause I don't want to like have nothing, I want to have a job I want and stuff, 'cause all my family members hate their job and like get depressed over work, 'cause they're not happy in their work and struggle financially and I just don't want that, like, I want to go the other way, so I think they knew I've always had that in me, deep down, so just bring it out of me again sometimes, yeah."*

"When I went on to Breathing Space and Safe Hands, they like helped me, so like I had set goals and stuff like that and they just made it easier for me to get where I need to be, if that makes sense, so it was good, yeah, they do help you."

In terms of this key working or mentoring support from the project staff often the young people would describe the relationship as one where they felt there was a mutual compatibility between worker and young person. Although more formal key working relationships were acknowledged the interviews with young people often expressed a general sense of close relationships with the staff group who had been with the project as a stable feature over a period of years.

"No-one really has a formal worker, there's like three or four people than run the programme and you turn to them, but I think it just happened really that we just clicked really, sort of thing, so it was nice, that you can just have someone to turn to and like, sometimes I'll just ring him and say, oh, we talk about the Everton match, we don't even talk about what's going on for me in general,

we'll just say, that was a disgrace on the weekend, weren't it, do you know what I mean, the conversation is not just always about me, it can be about anything."

"I came on to Breathing Space as a participant then and that sort of came about because I had issues at home and I was in and out of care as well, so that was sort of a chance for me to have some breathing space and just to relax and just to come in and offload really, 'cause we've done, well, we still do activities as well, it was like part of a family, so it was like refreshing coming here because you know that you've got support whenever, wherever, so that was like a brilliant opportunity for me to offload to everyone and just enjoy myself really."

Sport and Activities Programme

So, young people felt the quality of individual relationships with staff was an important factor in their positive experience of Goodison Road. The formal programme of activities offered was seen as secondary to this and evidence from the interviews suggest that it was important that the young people felt they had a choice about which elements of the programme they would engage with.

"I feel like the staff, Breathing Space, they're literally, they're so passionate about all the kids, literally all of them and it's not ever, like, we're put into groups, right and it's like each individual is treated individually, you know what I mean, like Joe, who walked us down then, I went to school with him and like we're dead good mates now but we've had completely like different experiences and stuff, like, we've needed completely different support, but we've both got that and like obviously you didn't know us in school, but like from how far we've come in school to like how we are now, we're like different people."

"The activities are good, but they're more for sport, like around sport and that's just me personally, like, even school, I hated sport, I was the same in the free school,

so I think they've just accepted that, [laughs], they just know I won't do it."

"Yeah, they gave me the opportunity, like, we've done boxing and stuff like that, boxing courses, rock climbing courses and I just choose not to take part."

The Everton Badge

Young people readily commented on the role of the Everton Club in terms of drawing them into the project. It was also clear that being a Liverpool supporter, a 'red' was not necessarily a barrier for these young people who had 'opted in'.

"I do think Everton has a big deal, like, it's just looked at differently, say if I'm like, I'd much rather say I'm going to Everton than I'm going to CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service], do you know what I mean, it's just got, people think, oh, Everton and it's not that, like, it's just thought of differently, I think and especially, like, so many more people, like I used to wear the uniform but it's pointless if I wasn't doing the activities, but I just think, 'cause you're wearing a badge and stuff, you're just kind of respected a bit more and like it's not got that big, like, what's it, label, it's more like Everton does so much, you know, I thought I was like, oh, you're struggling with stuff, just 'cause you're involved in Everton, whereas if I'm like, I'm going to CAMHS, it'd be like, I wonder what's wrong with her, you know what I mean."

This young woman felt that the club had a respect within the community which could counter the perceived stigma of being engaged with CAMHS. The next section discusses some of the comments about working with other agencies. The comment below from another young man refers to the head start the club had as he was already a supporter of the team.

"I think with it being Everton, 'cause I'm a blue, that they'd have a good impact on me there, yeah, you know, I'm proud of being Evertonian and I was happy when

they wanted to work with me, do you know what I mean..."

"Yeah and when you look into it, you think, wow, I'm part of this, you know, I can say to my mates, right, I've been in Goodison today, you know, 'cause I do the banner on match days sometimes as well, so I'm working on Saturday and we'll do 'em a banner in the centre circle here, so it's when the players can come out..."

There is a sense of reflected glory from the above quote from one young man who was now engaged by the project as a peer mentor. It is difficult to gauge whether there might be a corresponding reluctance to engage from those young people who support the other team in Liverpool and identify as 'reds'. However, in the small group we interviewed one young man was a 'red' and did not feel he had been put off by this allegiance and another said he might have been unlikely to take part if he was not already a 'blue'. One participant made the following comments:

"And did you follow a team before or...?"

Yeah, Liverpool.

Right, okay and did it make any difference that it's Everton?

Not really, no, 'cause I think, well, we get everything for free off them, so like we don't have to pay for nothing, but like you wouldn't see Liverpool doing that, so..."

As discussed further below, the referring agencies felt that the team allegiance issue was not a significant barrier they had experienced when making referrals.

The Everton family

It was also clear, however, that the Everton message about family and the all-embracing sense of belonging, which finds expression as a strong part of the EitC model, was not lost on these young people who reflected this in their talk throughout the interviews. For the most part this theme was linked to the notion of the house as a special place where the

relationships with staff were focused around mutuality and support.

"It's probably better, 'cause like you feel, like, yeah, big family."

"I'd happily go in the house and like can I talk to one of them, than like go to a doctor or a counsellor, do you know what I mean, it's so much more informal and like I know that they're genuinely bothered, do you know what I mean?"

"The house, it's like my second home, the house, like, but I feel like that's the whole point and I feel like everyone who goes feel that way."

"I'd lived at my Mum's address for 15, 16 years until this had all happened, so and then going from there to being in a hostel on your own, not knowing anyone in the hostel, or to a care home, not knowing anyone in the care home, you're going to feel lonely and you're not going to know who to turn to, but obviously once I started getting involved properly, it fulfilled my days, so I didn't have them thoughts anymore, I didn't have the loneliness, I was getting out and about, doing things, so..."

"It was like part of a family, so it was like refreshing coming here because you know that you've got support whenever, wherever, so that was like a brilliant opportunity for me to offload to everyone and just enjoy myself really."

"It gives you that space to relax a bit more, you know, you're set back from the professionalism, sort of thing..."

"Yeah, 2016, but even though, you know, like, obviously [I] came on as a staff member, like, I still get support now because everyone knows me and you know, they know, like, my past situations as well, so I've always got support wherever I need it, whoever it's from and it's like we're a tightknit family as well, so yeah."

"They've helped me to enjoy life as a whole as well, 'cause I'm 18 now and got my own place, I've got a stable job, I've got an amazing group of friends, so they've been just a massive factor in my life really and I couldn't have done it without them, 'cause they're all like my family and I'll always be so grateful to them, so yeah, that's a massive one."

7. REFERRING AGENCIES

Four agencies were spoken to and gave telephone interviews answering a range of questions about their experience of making referrals, the outcomes experienced by the young people they referred and their thoughts about the strengths and limitations of the project.

Referral Process

Referring agencies found the Goodison Road referral process flexible and responsive. Positives noted were their speedy offer to young people with a meeting arranged quickly and young people being offered a place without a waiting list. The project's wide geographical coverage over the whole of Merseyside was also noted. One special school referrer noted that other agencies who could potentially work with one young person he referred were more limited in terms of working with young people identified as an offender who had more risky behaviour profiles. Goodison Road was appreciated as being able to take on a range of referral issues across the board from educational, to offending and relationship based issues. The early help team leader discussed 10 to 15 referrals he had made:

"Every referral I've made has been accepted and basically, you know, I couldn't sort of rate them highly enough really, they've done a superb done with every family and young person I've worked with and they always come along to sort of, they have meetings and all the professional meetings that I arrange and provide input and feedback for the young person and how they're getting on with sort of the sessions and programmes that they do, Everton put on for them."

"Yeah, every time, it's always been within a day or two, which is really good as well and they're very quick to respond to referrals and always quick to sort of come out on home visits or go and see the young person in school, to chat about the service once the referral has been received by them."

A rehabilitation worker from a Merseyside prison described the difficulties in the referral process for a prison where any failures could have ramifications not just for the prisoner but for the institution. He was referring to the risks where prisoners are released on license to prepare for release by working in the community and any problems encountered could potentially reflect badly on the prison's rehabilitation programme. In this case one successful referral had led to some groupwork which Goodison Road staff had undertaken at the prison and the prison was delighted with the response from prisoners and were hopeful of developing the relationship further. In another case an initial setback was overcome:

"Through Everton showing, you know, kind of like confidence in her ability, then yet again, you know, it wasn't a case of, no, we can't have her, etc, they still wanted to come in, build it up again, build it up, little bit of, you know, acting like a mother figure, advice, etc, support and before you know it, she's back out again and it was a case of, and it went from there on and it was a very successful period that she actually worked with Everton and then, as far as I'm aware, through liaising with Everton, that she still works like on a volunteering basis, so it's proved to be successful from our side of it as well."

A youth offending worker in Wirral emphasized the lack of provision for young offenders excluded from school on the Wirral side and he found Goodison Road willing to respond rapidly to his referral when a young person had been without school placement for 3 months.

"I have to let young people know the end date at the start of the intervention because we can't work forever, but obviously Everton told him, you know, you're not going to be with us forever but you could be with us for 12 months, we'll just have to see how it goes and I think that was sort of music to this lad's ears because, at the point of him starting, he didn't know where he was going, what he was doing, he'd just been left and you know, I think he felt a lot of pressure. I think the fact that Everton sort of said, we'll just play it by ear and see how you go, it helped him, you know, getting over the barrier and getting back engaged."

Outcomes

Referrers on the whole have been looking for a range of outcomes relating to the reduction of behavioural issues at home or in the community. All referrers have primarily looked for a sustained engagement from staff and none of them discussed an expectation of detailed and specific hard outcomes in the short or medium term. Outcomes in respect of improved educational pathways and training or employment outcomes were mentioned as important in the longer term. All have emphasised the individual negotiation of programmes to fit young people's diverse needs and we have seen how this is a strong position in the Goodison Road model which finds resonance with these referrers. Referring agencies primarily were looking for a sustained engagement.

For two of the referrers improved self-esteem was important. For these referrers the raising of self-esteem was seen as a stepping stone to harder outcomes in respect of education and employment.

One referrer had some reservations and felt that although a young man he had referred had maintained his engagement with the programme he had not bought into the programme and he felt he was only marking time. This leads to comments made with regard to the strengths and limitations perceived by referrers.

Strengths and Limitations

The main strengths of the project were seen as the quick and easy referral process where young people were offered a service quickly. None of the referrers had experienced a rejection when they made a referral. Leading on from this another strength was seen as the quick engagement with the service users and the establishment of an individual programme that young people were able to buy into. This was mentioned across the board.

The early help manager who had referred the most young people to the service felt that the majority of young people had achieved some benefit even if it was being occupied and engaged in the programme constructively, while the more formal achievements in terms of qualifications in sports and activities were noted.

"Yeah, I think they've certainly made a difference to the majority of the children I've referred to them and you know, been able to engage them and you know, whether it's getting them a qualification, you know, like a sports leadership qualification or whether it's simply just getting them to come to sessions, so they're doing something, rather than just sort of going out with sort of peers, then yeah, that's certainly, definitely a bonus and I think they've done sort of really well in that respect."

This interviewee had experienced some young people who did not engage with the service but he reasoned that they had been refusing to engage with all attempts to engage them and he did not fault Goodison Road for these exceptions.

The ability of project staff to engage young people was seen as a strength and one agency put it down to the staff members' manner and approach to speaking to young people, contrasting with the style of other professionals.

"Just the fact that they can go out and go and sort of engage with these young people, I think, is really good and chat to

them also on a level that sort of breaks down those barriers, which I think really helps them engage with the young people as well and you know, every young person that I've referred them, they sort of talk to them and me about, you know, how they sort of just treat them with respect and chat to them, you know, in quotation marks, sort of normally, whereas some sort of professionals that they work with, I think sometimes they can be just a bit intimidated or put off by how they speak to them but, you know, I've never had that sort of response from Everton in the Community, every young person I've spoken to has always said they've been really sort of respectful and just chat to them and sort of get them to try and get engaged and involved in all these activities that they put on for them."

One other referrer mentioned above, who had reservations, noted what he regarded as limitations in the project. He was looking for a more intensive and formal approach to educational targets and also would have liked a more intensive, routinised formal feedback on attendance on a daily basis. In addition, he found it difficult to contact staff urgently by telephone.

"When we've had to meet and discuss maybe behavioural incidents, that's been managed quite easily, but sort of on the day and urgent requirements to speak to people, it has proven difficult at times."

One other limitation mentioned by the prison officer who was interviewed was in relation to finding suitable candidates for referral who fitted into the criteria of residence in Greater Merseyside and with sentences of between 3 and 18 months. He respected the project's requirements for the criteria but observed that many of the prisoners were on very short sentences.

As a general observation from the referring agencies it could be said that, aside from one school respondent, the agencies appreciated the strength of the project engagement skills, their individual and open-ended approach to their offer and their ability to sustain that

involvement. They were less concerned, aside from the agency noted above, with a series of hard outcomes but more interested in sustained engagement and emotional and personal growth with an expectation that this had the potential to lead to more concrete gains in terms of employment and training in the future.

8. CASE STUDIES

The following two case studies are compiled with the young people's permission by combining interview data and project data from summaries prepared by staff for inclusion in annual reports. They represent two young people, one male and one female, who have been engaged in the programme over a period of years. Their function as case studies in this report is to demonstrate aspects of the programme and model of practice and through these individual stories give a richer sense of how the programme can and does work.

Case 1 – Gary

This young man described himself as coming from a stable home background and family. Problems at school led to Gary being excluded from school.

"I weren't happy at school, you know, so that made me not happy at home and then I started getting involved with the wrong, I'm not blaming anyone, I blame myself for what happened, I don't condone anything that I've done, but the people I was hanging round with and getting involved with weren't the best people, do you know what I mean?"

Gary explained that things went from bad to worse when he was stabbed and his family were coming under greater pressure due to his trouble with offending in the community. Gary is diagnosed with autism now but in his earlier teenage years his mental health was poor. He was involved in selling drugs and violence towards others, making life very difficult to the extent he ended up in hostels and in care and at one point in a crisis ward with mental health troubles as an inpatient.

Gary was articulate and reflective about his experiences and always careful to take responsibility for his troubles during his interview. He acknowledges that at first his contact with services, including an early referral to the Breathing Space project at Goodison Road, he was not fully engaged. He had been involved in the Princess Trust

programme whilst still in care and they referred him on to Breathing Space where he attended for a short period before ending up in custody. It was during his two periods in custody that Gary explained that he realised that he needed to engage with available help and support in order to change his life.

"Yeah, so while I was on Breathing Space, I didn't really take notice, to be honest, I weren't compliant there, to be honest, although they were trying to be positive and help me, 'cause of what was going on, my mental state weren't, I just didn't want to comply with no-one, I just wanted to be left alone, just wanted to take everything on my own shoulders, but when I come onto Safe Hands, I started co-operating and getting involved, I was attending three times a week. Even when I was in custody, I was writing letters to Everton in the community, I always stayed in contact with the lads and yeah, so that's when I started towards it."

Gary was referred to the Safe Hands side of the project when he was in custody and he acknowledges he had only paid lip service in his previous engagement with Breathing Space. Gary went on to explain that the fact that staff had visited him in prison and the continuing visits had been crucial in cementing his commitment to engage in the programme upon release. When Gary returned to the community, he invested a greater commitment to the programme. Staff reports from the time indicate that things were going well and he was picking up positive notice from staff

impressed by the change in his demeanor and overall commitment to change and positive goals.

Unfortunately, Gary was remanded in custody for a period for charges that were later dropped. During this period it is noted that he was visited by staff and wrote letters to the project confirming his continuing commitment to his Safe Hands programme.

Gary has had extended involvement with a number of agencies from Social Services to Youth Offending workers, CAMHS, the Police and Courts. He reflects on the role of these different agencies and finds a way to express a sense of gratitude even towards the Police who initially charged him with the offences that resulted in his custodial sentence.

"Yeah, so while I was on Breathing Space, that's when my offending took place, that's when I, even when I first went to Safe Hands, I did reoffend and I went back to custody, so that was obviously a bad start, so when I got out, I reoffended and ended up going back to custody, but Safe Hands supported me through it, they didn't give up, they didn't think, oh, he's come out and he's messed up again, they still stayed in contact, they still wanted me to engage, they wanted to be there and support me, they come up on regular visits to the prison and I don't know if you'd know that... And was writing to me every week, sending me stamps, sending me them so I could write back to them, sending me football programs, stuff like that, so they were very supportive."

It was very important to Gary that the staff had not given up on him and he reiterated this point as below,

"I can't fault them since day one, even like when I weren't engaging, they were still very, trying very hard to make me engage, which I expected them not to at first, I thought, oh, they'll just give up on me eventually, but they never, they stood by me, which I'm grateful for."

Gary also cites the counselling relationship he developed with CAMHS staff and the support from his social worker and his youth offending worker. The primary issues which he needed to improve in his life were around, his relationships with family, his mental health, his offending and future employment.

At the time of the interview Gary measured his progress positively in all these fields. He was living independently in his own flat together with his partner who was expecting their child. He had good relationships with his family and has not taken drugs or felt he is at risk of offending. He felt that he had addressed his mental health issues and was positive about the future. He has an on-going relationship with the staff at Goodison Road and whilst the research was underway called in to chat to staff on more than one occasion.

Case 2 – Lisa

Lisa had been involved with Breathing Space between the ages of 14 and 20 by the time she was interviewed for this evaluation report. She began her involvement at the Everton Free School and explained that she was one of the first pupils there. Lisa has had long standing mental health problems, including anxiety. The educational disruptions she has experienced were related to those issues.

Lisa described a difficult childhood where problems with her mental health and difficult relationships at home led firstly to an involvement with CAMHS and then a time attending an inpatient hospital unit for young people with mental health difficulties. Lisa had left mainstream school at the start of her year 7 in High school and started at the hospital school. However, Lisa found she could not settle there and by her own account she was asked to leave the school.

"Yeah, like, it made my views on education even worse, like, that made me not want to go back, like, I made a best friend there and then we ended up having this big fall out, but like after that fall out, it was like they just picked this out and told me to leave and that was that, basically."

After leaving the hospital unit Lisa came to Everton Free School during year 9. She found the small classrooms and more relaxed ethos easier to settle with and did well with her GCSEs despite a lengthy absence from formal education.

Lisa explained that the involvement with Everton was a big turning point for her:

"So there was only me and one other girl and then like, well, six or seven other boys and then obviously as the year went on, like, more pupils would come, but it was only very small, like, there was never more than 10 pupils in my classroom and there would be like a main teacher and another one, so it wasn't like I was in some big classroom and we were all kind of in the same boat, so it was just nice, do you know what I mean, it was never like, you've got to do this or leave basically, so yeah."

Lisa had a longstanding relationship with a counsellor at CAMHS until she was 18 years old but when she started at the Free School began a mentor relationship with a member of staff at Breathing Space. After her CAMHS counselling relationship ended Lisa was offered and accepted a referral to another counsellor from Breathing Space with whom she engaged for a short period before finishing.

Lisa explained that the main benefit of her journey with Breathing Space was the support through the combination of the Free School educational regime and the mentoring from Breathing Space helping her pursue personal goals. In terms of her on-going mental health troubles she has found the informal and flexible support crucial for her needs.

"With my mental health, like, although I do struggle, I don't like to dwell on things, it's not like, say at counselling you go every time and used to talk about your mental health and what I like about Breathing Space is when I go, they don't like push, like, if I want to talk about it, I know that I can to them, like, can we talk about something and they're there straight away, but I don't have to do

anything, like, if I have a problem, they'll try their best and help me and support me with it, but I feel like, now, like, I'd happily go, in the house and like [ask], 'can I talk to one of you?', than like go to a doctor or a counsellor, do you know what I mean, it's so much more informal and like I know that they're genuinely bothered, do you know what I mean?"

Following up on her personal goals, aside from managing her mental health, Lisa has pursued Educational goals and always wanted to go to University. Support with mentoring and forming plans, preparing for interviews and getting a lift from project staff to an upcoming interview at a local University has been crucial for Lisa.

For Lisa the sport based aspects of the programme were not significant although she did acknowledge some value in her participation.

"I've done some, I think the activities, they benefit a lot more people than me, 'cause I'm just not sporty at all, but like for a lot of people, like, especially all the young lads and that, they love it because, like, it's meeting players, it's playing football, it's going rock climbing, like it's amazing for them, the opportunities you wouldn't just be able to do yourself, whereas obviously 'cause sport isn't my cup of tea, the activities haven't benefited me as much as they have for other people..."

Although Lisa mentions below the activity based part of the programme did have some impact on her self-confidence.

"...but then other activities that haven't been so revolving around sport, like, let me think, take rock climbing, I've done that and then I've done, like, I'm trying to think what else, we've done like, in the summer, like, an activity in town, where it was like the girls against the boys and that was all fun and that does help me, like, bring my confidence out a bit, 'cause it's like, okay, that wasn't as bad as I thought."

Family issues were also a struggle for Lisa when her parents divorced and at one point Lisa was asked to leave the family home, becoming estranged from her parents for a time. She acknowledged that project staff played a role in easing the communication between her and her family but now that relationships are closer, she notes that staff have respected her wish that they step back and refrain from contacting her family unless they have concerns about not hearing from Lisa and want to ensure all is well.

Lisa went on to achieve employment at a major retailer as a shop assistant for over a year and now is being supported towards her goal of entering University and considers her life to be on track to fulfil her goals. Lisa has experienced problems establishing new friendships and feels uncomfortable with her old relationships from when she was going through more difficult and disruptive episodes. These connections had faltered during a time when she felt more anger, frustration and anxiety. The project staff have continued to be an important part of her moving forward and slowly making her own way towards establishing her own support networks.

This case study demonstrates something about the open ended and persistent commitment of staff and the patient support which can show results over a period of years in cases where relationship problems, mental health, educational and employment issues form a complex set of challenges and obstacles which may be difficult to compartmentalise and schedule into a more structured and time limited model of support.

9. DISCUSSION



The following discussion considers the elements of a programme theory of change as described by staff in focus group discussions and internal and external reports to funders and referral agencies triangulated with data from referrers and participants. The aim here is to discuss the extent to which there is a general agreement, or congruence, between the ideas of programme staff and managers and the agencies and young participants. This produces a figurative model of practice for the project that offers a summation of the Goodison Road offer most closely associated with the overall positive assessment of what staff, participants and referring agencies suggest is the model of practice found in the programme itself.

Programme theory

From the staff discussions broad themes had been identified which underlined the youth work approach and strong value base of the staff group. Staff talked about; listening to young people without rushing to judgement, offering honesty and trustworthiness, dealing with young people as unique valued individuals and not a set of concerns or problems. Staff discussed offering guidance, opportunities for new experiences, persistent acceptance, flexible approaches, being available, and placing central importance on developing respect and rapport through one to one mentoring relationships.

Another strong theme from staff was around the physical and relational space of the project in the house at Goodison Road. In creating a space characterised by ideas of 'homeliness' staff felt they were striving for a nurturing and caring environment where young people could be offered food and comfort, an open door, some elements of control over social space, a place where there were opportunities to relax and socialise without necessarily being part of a structured activity.

Lastly, staff discussed the mechanism of Everton Football Club as an attractive proposition for young people - what is often termed the power of the badge, and overarching ideology of the corporate family

approach to participants who become part of the club.

These three areas were underlying the more operational mechanisms of the project that are expressed in the evaluative reports and promotional material produced for funders and referring agencies respectively. The programme theories identified in this documentation can be grouped in the following set of propositions for practice.

1. The project aims to engage young people quickly and proposes that offering a swift response to young people and engaging with them personally at an early stage can support more sustained commitment and engagement from young people who may find it difficult to accept support.
2. The project aims to respond quickly to young people's priorities through establishing a personal mentoring relationship and working the young person's pace towards individually tailored sets of goals within the overall context of the project offer.
3. Child centred and personal mentoring within the context of a challenging programme can raise self efficacy and self esteem.
4. Offering certificates for achievement in course work in terms of sporting activity and other skills based course work again offers support to outcomes in self esteem and self efficacy.
5. Engagement in sport and outdoor activities on a regular basis will lead to improvement outcomes in physical fitness and general health as will encouragement towards a healthy diet.
6. Offering skills related course work builds towards successful employment outcomes for young people post project.
7. By monitoring and helping to resolve relationship issues between young people, their ability to access to the opportunities that come with engagement can be improved and sustained.

These explicit programme theories can now be corroborated and compared with the findings from data gathered from primary sources during the evaluation process. Firstly, as noted above the focus group with staff supported the strong value base and youth work focus of members of the team, a substantial proportion of whom have a background and formal qualification in youth work. The programme theory and approach is a youth work approach including recognition of young people's rights. This includes recognition of the capacity of young people to engage and commit to growth and change given appropriate support and encouragement. This identifies the programme as a Plus Sports project¹⁷ based around a youth work model employing sports and games as a part of the programming. There is also support for how the programme mechanisms and outcomes are brought together in the process of engagement between staff, the young people, referring agencies and the Club itself.

Quick Take-up and Early Engagement with Referrals

There is significant support for this assumption from some referrers who specifically stated that young people were seen and engaged quickly by programme staff. As far as referring professionals were concerned the open door and affirmative response to referrals was a significant positive point of evaluation. Getting off on the right foot and being seen to offer a quick response may well help young people see the staff as committed and eager to recognise them as of worth. Seeing young people frequently and maintaining that contact is equally important. These young people represent an often disadvantaged, marginalised group, often experiencing measures of failure in education and seen as morally compromised as a result of their offending behaviour while struggling with issues of low self esteem and poor relationships. Beginning the engagement process with an expression of valuing young

¹⁷ See Coalter (2013) for a full explanation and p14 of this report for a summary.

people and making a personal offer of the 'clean slate', and solidarity or friendship in difficult times is intuitively an encouraging start and was reflected positively in the accounts of young people themselves about the initial approach from staff.

Physical Activity

In the programme outlined above there is a high level of participation in physical activity represented. Simply through being around the project on a day to day basis and from examining timetabled programming it can be seen clearly that some kind of physical activity, be it football, other games As already discussed, the essential impact of physical activity itself is not easily determined beyond the obvious one of getting fitter. However, there is evidence of the utility in the approach which uses sport and physical games as a tool to attract and generate a sense of fun while capitalising on the appeal of a premier league football club. This was clear from participants and the staff sense of identification with the club as a family.

The interview data underlines that not all young people have an interest in sport and some of the participants have a very ambivalent attitude to sport, seeing it as something for other people in the main and not as an attraction for them. However, these young people felt it was a strength of the project that this was no obstacle to engagement with the project. These young participants felt that they were able to develop personal goals of relevance to themselves through the mentoring work with staff members.

Certificated Skills Work

The second element of programme theory discerned from documentation was the certification of achievements as a means of raising self efficacy amongst young people. The project data indicates that targets in

this respect are comfortably achieved by the project and are an integral part of the programme, offering a straightforward measure of achievement in most activities undertaken as part of the programme. The project evaluation reports on young people's achievement of personal goals indicates that there is a strong tendency for young people to report improvements in self esteem and self efficacy over time spent engaged with the project. It is difficult to prove causal relationships in service effects but as a programme theory there is support for the role of certificated course work.

Certainly, the interview data was limited relating to the perceived impact of certification as such as the participants focused more on the resulting outcomes in improved personal and social relationships and improved economic status. There was some strong evidence of this in each case as detailed above.

One to One Mentoring and Personal Planning

The programme model emphasises a key role in personal mentoring of young people towards the achievement of individual personal goals. The staff and programme documents hold that aspirations and motivation can be increased through a supported individually tailored offer of new experiences and opportunities for achievement. As illustrated in the model of the programme mechanism below (figure 1), this has the status of a key underlying and explicit theory of change which the staff found crucial to their sense of what works in the programme. There was strong support for this view from the young people interviewed and referring agencies were likewise looking for this individual focus and support for personal change. This reflects wider understandings of the needs of this kind of marginalised group when dealing with the high risk of negative reinforcement where young people are used to exclusion from universal service

¹⁸ Thomas's (2012) exploration of 'recognition' includes a three part analysis of love, rights and solidarity, in thinking about youth people's participation, and includes the underlying principle of a fundamental mutual recognition of personal worth as a building block of self esteem and self confidence for young people. This theme of recognition is further acknowledged in the section on Social Climate on pp41-42 in the account of building physical and relational space for nurturing young people which formed an important part of staff narratives.

provision, including experiences of secure accommodation, and often troubled personal relationships with family and peers alike. Literature on youth work and goal setting would tend to see the setting of goals as fundamental to personal change programmes and mentoring schemes generally but the imposition of unrealistic or inappropriate goals imposed in haste and without due process of consideration between mentor and mentee are the most likely to fail. Furthermore, coaching programmes based on mastery of personal targets towards self improvement, rather than competitive, externally referenced programmes geared towards winning and ego-driven social recognition, are most closely associated with positive results in stronger motivation, ability to cope with disappointment, and positive life skills¹⁹.

In alignment with this approach staff were clear that goal setting with young people at Goodison Road required time and relationship building to avoid the imposition of inappropriate goals likely to fail.

Social Climate – Family, Acceptance and Belonging

As detailed in the statement of findings above, both the staff and young people interviewed placed great emphasis on the general social climate or ambience they found remarkable in the project house at Goodison Road. The creation of an open door and socially welcoming space with a theme of homeliness and family type relationships at the project level and beyond in the larger domain of Everton in the Community (EitC) was often discussed. The researchers found this characterisation of EitC at all levels of the organisation and was in the order of a mission statement. In terms of the context of this young people's project it appears clear that this social climate of acceptance and support is significantly beneficial for the work. It has to be acknowledged that young people who

did not feel Goodison Road was the place for them do not feature in the sample of those interviewed and it was beyond the scope of this research to assess the young people who may have passed through the project previously and whose outcomes were not significantly improved in any notable respect. However, those young people who found the project a significant support on their journey to adulthood uniformly placed great store on the Everton family. Of course, motivation prior to engagement with projects is more than likely a significant indicator of success or otherwise in engagement with programme activities and goals.

These themes of acceptance and belonging are important features of our model for youth work. Both as support to the building of trusting relationships facilitating personal mentoring of young people and the creation of a supportive environment where young people's relationships with each other can thrive.

It has been suggested that the building of any space for partnership with young people requires 'recognition' of young people in terms of three domains of love, rights and solidarity²¹. In the context of family relationships and in the family home as an ideal we see unconditional relationships modelled. Young people find the home as a place more conducive to the sharing of personal concerns and issues as opposed to the formality of professional spaces and professional relationships²². In seeking a space more like a home programme staff are seeking a space for relationships which are prepared to recognise young people's status as valued beyond the trials of their troubled behaviours and failures of decision making – their human frailty and precariousness. The domain of rights reflected in formal concerns of legal frameworks and human rights is inclusive of a concern for respect and self-respect, and independent capacity in decision making. This means an empowered

¹⁹ See Pepitas et al (2005)

²⁰ See Pawson (2004)

²¹ See Thomas (2012)

²² Mayall (2006); Hill (1999); Moss & Petrie (2002)

participation and status within partnerships which we find reflected in sensitive respectful mentoring. Solidarity in turn is essentially a recognition of social struggle and forms of discrimination and structural oppression. This aims at an understanding of social contexts, mutual regard and the sense of over-arching shared goals. The extent to which we can see that we are 'all in it together'.

The Everton Badge

It may be that there are young people who find their football allegiances lie elsewhere but the effectiveness of the Everton Badge in attracting young people who did not consider themselves Everton supporters is supported by interview data. There was no evidence that indicated young people were put off by the Everton Badge. As reported above, one referrer and two participants felt there was more to be said about the avoidance of social stigmas attached to direct government or local authority services than the Football club with its cache of celebrity footballers and mass public appeal of football culture. For this Plus Sports model of youth working there would appear to be significant advantage in the use of the Everton Badge to promote engagement from young people. At the same time this may only form an initial appeal and unlikely be enough to sustain the whole programme through to medium and longer term outcomes for young people with the project.



The young people interviewed made it clear that, at some point, it is the commitment and motivation to engage with the project and the nurturing of that impulse to improve their

personal outcome, which is the most vital ingredient. This is down to the partnership between staff and the young people in the medium and longer term. Personal motivation is not easily given to formulaic responses. The relationships of trust built between staff and young people is ultimately a personal one which requires committed staff and the skilled support of competent managers and an organisational context which in turn supports the work.

The Model of Practice Mechanisms and Programme Theories

The discussion of the findings and programme data for Goodison Road have been mapped in the model constructed below (figure 1). It offers an interpretation of the Goodison Road model mapped against the moving axes of; relationships and social climate offered by staff in the project; the social and personal contexts of the participants themselves; the mechanisms of process – mentoring, sports, certificated skills coaching, and the sets of outcomes. The @41 Goodison Road Project performs well because of the coherence of the strategy against these programme mechanisms. It engages its target group of participants with a thoughtful and informed assessment of participants' social and personal contexts; it acts swiftly with frequent contact to build personal relationships of trust and in due course moves towards meaningful personal goals in partnership with participants; thirdly it offers a welcoming sense of belonging and care and moves towards broad and flexible outcomes with patience and persistence. The model attempts to show the offer in these different spheres in a way which can be mapped against common features of supportive youth programmes derived from reviews found in relevant literature.

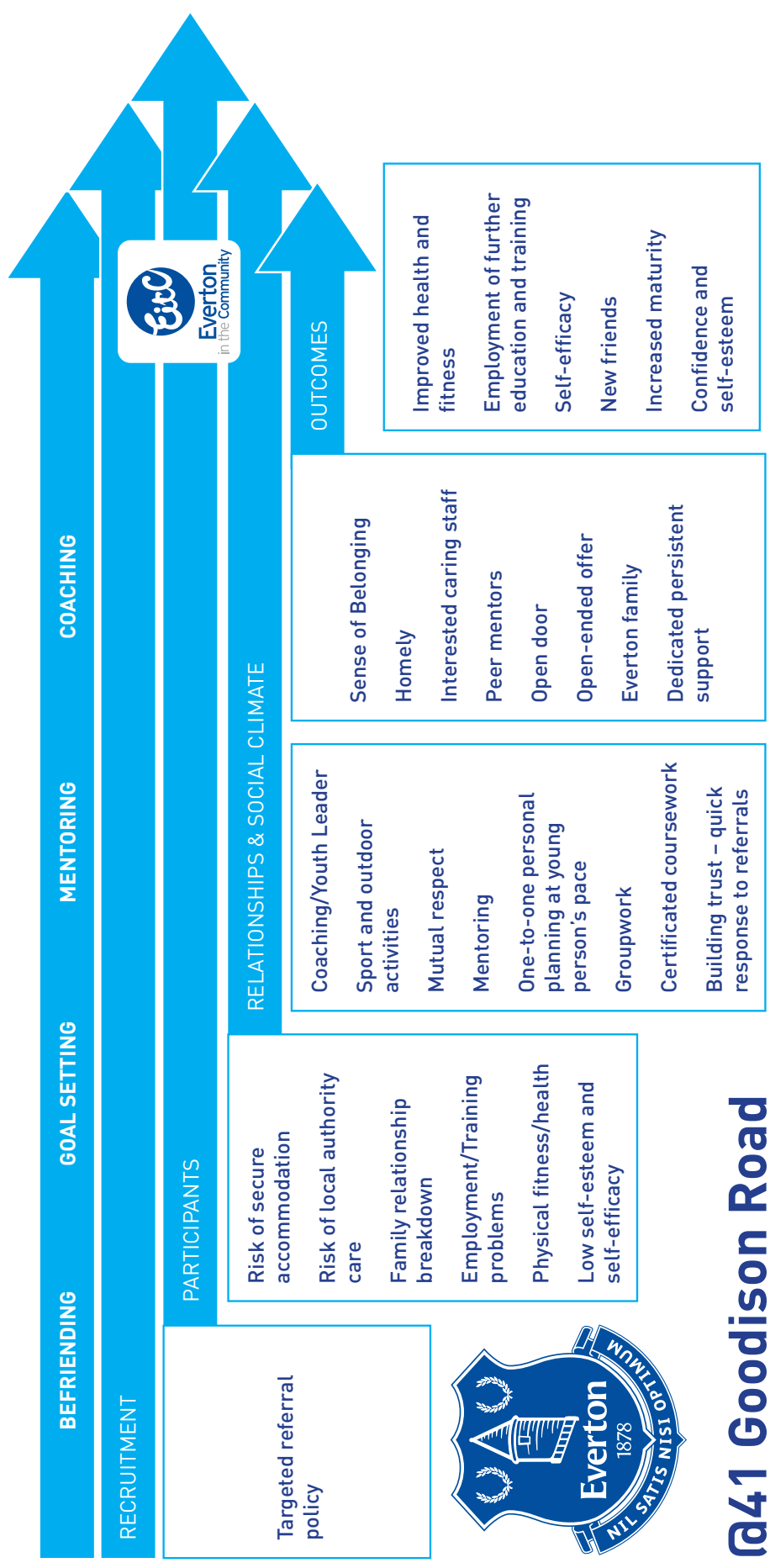


Figure 1 – Adaptation of Coalter's Programme Theory Framework applied to @41 Goodison Road

10. CONCLUSION

This evaluation report has triangulated data from reports and funding submissions with qualitative data from staff and participants in order to shed some light on issues of process and outcome in the work @41 Goodison Road.

It is important to acknowledge caveats and limitations to the study however. Timescales and resources available have meant there is no longitudinal element except in the data of former participants and staff who offered their time to participate.

The numbers of interviews are relatively small and all were individuals who were positive about their engagement with the staff and the programme at Goodison Road. However, by reflecting on this data and considering important features of this positive support for the programme it is possible to develop a coherent framework of programme theory and model of practice with young people.

The following elements combine to support an effective offer for young people at risk:

1. An understanding of the needs of the targeted participant group, their vulnerability and their potential.
2. An experienced staff and management who reflect positive youth work values offering respect and recognition for young people in trouble.
3. A set of programme mechanisms in terms of one to one mentoring, goal setting, and supportive relationships.
4. A persistence and patient approach which avoids restrictive time limiting or exclusionary practices.
5. A sense of belonging and care in staff relationships with participants which is supported with a physical space within the house at 41 Goodison road.
6. A realistic set of outcomes for personal and social within which there is a flexible space for young people to develop individual goals with experienced support.

This evaluation offered a significant endorsement of the capacity for vulnerable young people to respond to the offer of support and encouragement from youth work in the context of often deep seated social, and relationship-based problems. The programme however would be nothing without the staff that run it from managers to those undertaking the painstaking direct work with these young people.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.** The project has a strong youth work value base which combines the 'Everton Family' offer with the house environment creating a social climate and 'relationship space' which was clearly valued by staff and service users that were interviewed. We recommend that the project continue to develop this approach and use it as a key part of the offer to young people and referring agencies.
- 2.** The project evaluation underlined the strengths of the programme both in terms of the model of practice they have evolved but also in terms of the committed staff group that has been assembled. It is important to recognise that the success of a programme relates fundamentally to those working relationships, knowledge, skills and values that are supported and nurtured within the organisation. We recommend that Goodison Road maintain this focus on the key elements of the programme relating to the social climate and relationship-based offer which service users identified as a key point of positive appraisal.
- 3.** We have developed a model of the project offer to referring agencies and young people who may become service users. We recommend that the project either develop this graphic model or design another one which can set out their offer and provide a visually engaging statement based on the Plus Sports Youth Work model.
- 4.** While the two projects are moving together into one for management purposes there is still some difficulty in easily monitoring performance due to reporting arrangements for funders. Accordingly, we would recommend that the projects move to a single format for monitoring unified project key performance indicators which can offer a clear set of general criteria which will be unaffected by funders requirements.

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Everton
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Breathing Space and Safe Hands
@41 Goodison Road
Final Report

Dr Steven Lucas
Dr Lucy Hanson

January 2019

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