



COPING THROUGH FOOTBALL

Evaluation Report 2015

The London Playing Fields Foundation



North East London 
NHS Foundation Trust



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**Wembley National Stadium Trust
Dr Mortimer & Theresa Sackler Foundation
North East London NHS Foundation Trust**

Foreword

Coping Through Football has been delivered in the capital since 2007 as a way to engage with and improve the lives of people experiencing mental health problems. Through the expertise of project partners London Playing Fields Foundation, North East London NHS Foundation Trust and Leyton Orient Trust, the project has been able to demonstrate how a multi-agency approach can transform the lives of its participants. It is testament to sound partnership working between the three organisations that the project has gone from strength to strength and has extended its reach this year into three neighbouring boroughs and now provides bespoke sessions for teenagers. The inclusion of young people is a step change for the project. In the case of young people the project plays more of a preventative role, supporting those younger service users in receipt of early care provision by working alongside agencies to prevent more severe and long term mental ill health, promote recovery and improve the chances for better long lasting health outcomes.

Mental health was a key issue raised by the previous coalition government and, mainly as a result of the Time to Change campaign, there is now greater awareness and a determination to tackle the stigma related to mental health. These issues are also beginning to be addressed within the sporting fraternity. Earlier this year Sport & Recreation Alliance encouraged sporting bodies to sign up to its Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation which sets out how sport can use its collective power to tackle mental ill health and the stigma that surrounds it. Sport England has also recently awarded £1.5million to Mind to deliver a large scale programme using sport to improve the lives of 75,000 people experiencing mental health problems. Against this backdrop of greater public awareness and the desire to recognise best practice, Coping Through Football won the UEFA Grassroots Award 2014 and was voted Community Project of the Year at the London Football Awards 2015.

This report highlights how an innovative intervention underpinned by robust clinical governance and processes, can assist in reducing the burden of mental health on the nation. Section 1 provides an overview of the current social and economic impact of mental ill health in London. Sections 2 and 3 describe how Coping Through Football has grown within the last year and detail the work undertaken. Section 4 provides a profile of the project beneficiaries including their referral source and diagnosis. Section 5 charts the transformative impact of this work including education, employment, volunteering, health and social outcomes. Section 6 summarises the project's achievements.



Alex Welsh (LPFF), Barbara Armstrong (NELFT) and Howard Gould (LOT) receiving the Community Project of the Year at the London Football Awards 2015

1. Introduction - mental health in London

Every year an estimated one in four people will experience a diagnosable mental health condition. Mental ill health is the single largest source of disease burden in England and the costs extend beyond health and social care. It is widely recognised that mental ill health can have a wide impact upon a person’s life, affecting education and employment chances, physical health and the quality of personal relationships.

The recent “Better Health for London: Next Steps” report (March 2015) sets out the London Health Board’s shared ambition to achieve the London Health Commission’s aspirations for the health of Londoners which include:

- ◇ Care for the most mentally ill in London so they live longer, healthier lives
- ◇ Give all London’s children a healthy, happy start to life
- ◇ Enable Londoners to do more to look after themselves

Each year more than a million Londoners will experience mental health problems, with those who experience the highest levels of social disadvantage also experiencing poorer mental health. The physical health of people with mental illness is often poor. As a result, people with more severe and enduring mental illness die 15 - 20 years earlier than those without. Poor mental health dramatically affects quality of life and also carries a broader economic cost to the city.

The London Mental Health Report (GLA, 2014) states that nearly £7.5 billion is spent each year tackling mental health issues in London, this includes £2.8 billion on health and £550 million on social care, benefits, education and the criminal justice system. However these costs are only a part of the total £26 billion lost to London each year through issues such as reduced productivity and reduced quality of life.

The key economic impacts include:

£960m	The London boroughs' spend on benefits to support people with mental ill health
£920m	The sum lost annually to mental health related sickness absences in the city
£220m	The sum that the London criminal justice system spends annually on services related to mental ill health
£200m	The cost of the impacts of childhood psychiatric disorders on London’s education system

Across the country the money invested into mental health is not comparable to its prevalence. Whilst mental illness accounts for 23 per cent of the total disease burden in England it only receives 13 per cent of NHS health expenditure. Furthermore, for every £1 that the state invests in tackling cancer, the public gives £2.75. However for every £1 that the state invests in mental health the public donates 3p. These two facts illustrate the background against which the NHS and third sector organisations are delivering their services and indicate that there is a continuing need to raise awareness amongst the general public and tackle stigma related to mental health and for further investment in third sector organisations supporting NHS delivery.

2. Project background

Coping Through Football is a ground breaking and award winning project that uses football to engage with and improve the lives of people experiencing mental health issues.

The outcomes of the project are:

- ◇ To increase the physical activity levels of the client group
- ◇ To raise the self-esteem and confidence of the client group
- ◇ To improve the interactive skills of the client group
- ◇ To help the client group to re-engage with mainstream society in a meaningful way
- ◇ To help the client group reduce their dependency on alcohol, cigarettes and substance misuse

The project was founded as a collaborative partnership of three local providers: London Playing Fields Foundation, North East London NHS Foundation Trust and Leyton Orient Trust, each of whom bring key expertise, innovation and experience in delivering social inclusion projects.

Since 2007 the project has delivered football sessions for adult participants at two venues in Waltham Forest: Douglas Eyre Sports Centre and Score Centre. There has never been an overt reference to mental health at the Coping Through Football sessions. The emphasis has been on providing a first class football experience in a high quality community sports environment.



Douglas Eyre Sports Centre

In 2014 funding was secured from Wembley National Stadium Trust and Dr Mortimer & Theresa Sackler Foundation to increase the impact of the project in the following three ways:

1. To expand the delivery of adult sessions

North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT) covers four boroughs: Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest. As the existing provision was only reaching service users from Waltham Forest and there was a reported demand from the neighbouring boroughs for access to a similar provision, it was decided to organise two additional sessions at LPFF's Fairlop Oak Playing Field in Redbridge close to the borough boundaries of Havering and Barking & Dagenham. These sessions take place on Powerleague's small sided artificial pitches on Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

2. To extend the project to include young people

In order to address the gap in provision for young people, links were created with NELFT's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to explore ways in which the project could benefit their clients. The staff from the inpatient unit at Brookside organised for Coping Through Football to become part of their Wednesday afternoon timetable and made transport and staff available to support clients to attend the sessions. An additional session was established from 4.00 - 5.30pm on Mondays to enable young people to attend after school. These sessions are based at the Powerleague pitches on Fairlop Oak Playing Field, 2.5 miles from the Brookside unit at Goodmayes Hospital.

3. To increase capacity

With an increased number of sessions to be delivered each week it was necessary for the Project Coordinator's post to become a full time role. To cope with the increased monitoring and evaluation demands of the project expansion a Research Assistant was recruited to support the Project Coordinator in the regular interviewing of service users. Every six months service users complete a set of physical and mental health surveys with the Research Assistant in order to track their progress. The Research Assistant is a qualified Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner employed by NELFT and with significant experience of interviewing mental health service users. The final appointment, made in June 2014, was an Administrator to support the Project Coordinator and Research Assistant in collating the monitoring and evaluation information and promoting the project.

3. Project delivery

Following the expansion of Coping Through Football in March 2014 the project now delivers ten and a half hours of activity each week. The new timetable caters for adult and youth groups across three venues as detailed below:

Day	Time	Venue	Age group
Monday	2.00 - 4.00pm	Fairlop Oak Playing Field	Adult
Monday	4.00 - 5.30pm	Fairlop Oak Playing Field	12 - 17 years
Tuesday	2.00 - 4.00pm	Douglas Eyre Sports Centre	Adult
Wednesday	1.00 - 2.30pm	Fairlop Oak Playing Field	12 - 17 years
Wednesday	2.30 - 4.00pm	Fairlop Oak Playing Field	Adult
Thursday	2.00 - 4.00pm	Score Centre, Leyton	Adult

Experienced and suitably qualified coaches from Leyton Orient Trust are used to deliver the new sessions. They have all received mental health awareness training from the Project Coordinator so that they understand the specific needs of the client group and can adapt their sessions and delivery accordingly.

A “soft” launch of the project took place in March 2014 with the introduction of weekly adult and youth sessions at Fairlop Oak Playing Field in order to stimulate interest. From May a second session was introduced and numbers began to build steadily for both sessions.

The project’s Steering Group has been expanded to include representatives from the sports development units of the three additional boroughs and from NELFT’s CAMHS service. New service users were invited to attend meetings and a representative from Interactive, London’s champion for disability equality in sport, now sits on the group. This wider partnership working has enabled the project to add value to its existing services with links created to additional exit routes and training.

One of the first tasks undertaken by the Project Coordinator was an extensive promotion of the project across the four boroughs to mental health teams within NELFT and also to GPs, Primary Care and voluntary sector groups. Partnerships were also established with the CAMHS staff.

A public launch of the project took place in June 2014 when senior representatives from NELFT, London Playing Fields Foundation and Leyton Orient Trust gathered to receive the UEFA Grassroots Award from John Hollins MBE.



Howard Gould (LOT), Stewart Goshawk (WNST), John Hollins MBE, Alex Welsh (LPFF) and Bob Edwards (NELFT)

In addition to the weekly timetable of football coaching sessions the project provided service users with further opportunities to socialise. Leyton Orient FC generously provided tickets to first team matches and participants often invited friends or family members to join them in the stands. Throughout the year a number of small sided game tournaments were held to encourage service users from the three venues to meet, play and socialise. In October the project marked World Mental Health Day with a five-a-side tournament at Score Centre and in December a similar event took place at Fairlop Oak Playing Field.

An annual programme of healthy living workshops has also been established for users of the project. Taking place at the playing field venues immediately before the football sessions, they have focused on smoking cessation, diet and nutrition, physical wellbeing and more positive lifestyle choices. As these workshops take place in a familiar setting where the service users feel comfortable, attendances have been very encouraging. In January 2015 a smoking cessation workshop was delivered at Fairlop Oak Playing Field and was attended by twenty participants. Whilst not all those who attended the workshop were smokers themselves, 50% of the smokers left their name and contact details requesting further intervention from the 'Stop Smoking' service.

4. The results

4.1 Attendance

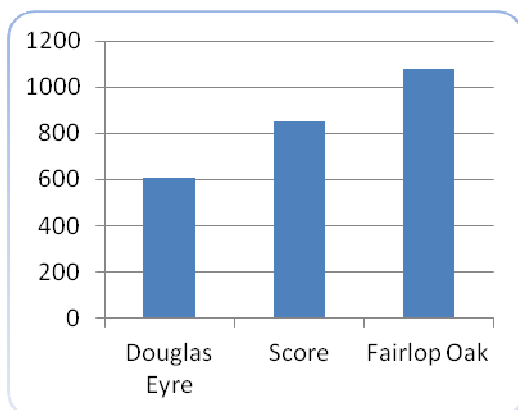
There is no prescribed period of time over which a service user can attend Coping Through Football sessions. Some participants attend the project for a few months as part of their recovery plan to get their lives back on track, whilst others are longer term users. A key benefit of the project is that it is flexible in regard to attendance. It is able to accommodate individuals who may struggle to attend during episodes of more acute mental health problems or life challenges, by supporting them, when ready, to return to the project as part of their recovery.

During the twelve month period from March 2014 – February 2015 the attendance figures were very encouraging. A total of 214 individuals took part in sessions with an annual throughput of 2866 visits.

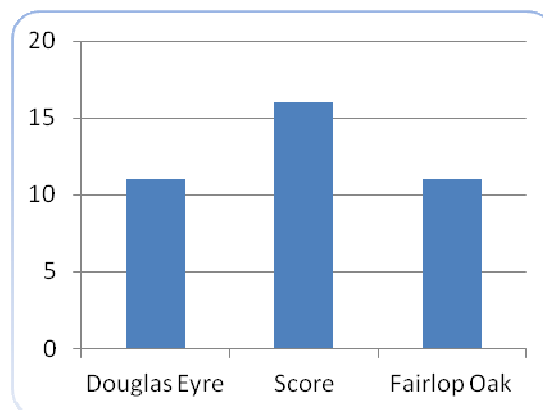
	Adult		Youth		Total	
	Participants	Throughput	Participants	Throughput	Participants	Throughput
Male	162	2431	24	235	186	2666
Female	13	107	15	93	28	200
Total	175	2538	39	328	214	2866

There were 2538 visits made to the adult sessions across the three venues, with an average attendance of 11 service users at both Fairlop Oak Playing Field and Douglas Eyre Sports Centre in Waltham Forest. The highest recorded average attendance (16) was at the Score Centre in Leyton. The Thursday sessions at this venue were the first established and they tend to attract more long term service users. A total of 205 adult sessions were delivered during the year and twelve service users attended at least a quarter of this number.

Number of visits per venue



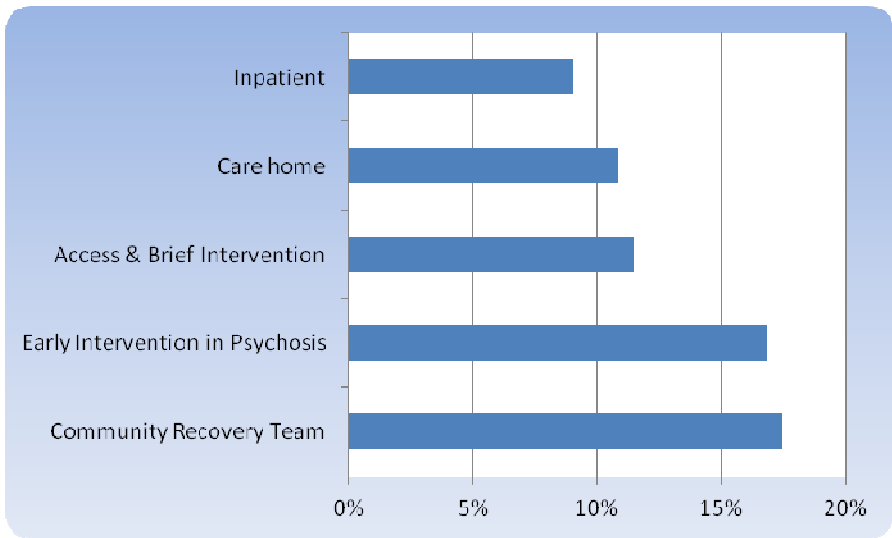
Average attendance per session



4.2 Referrals

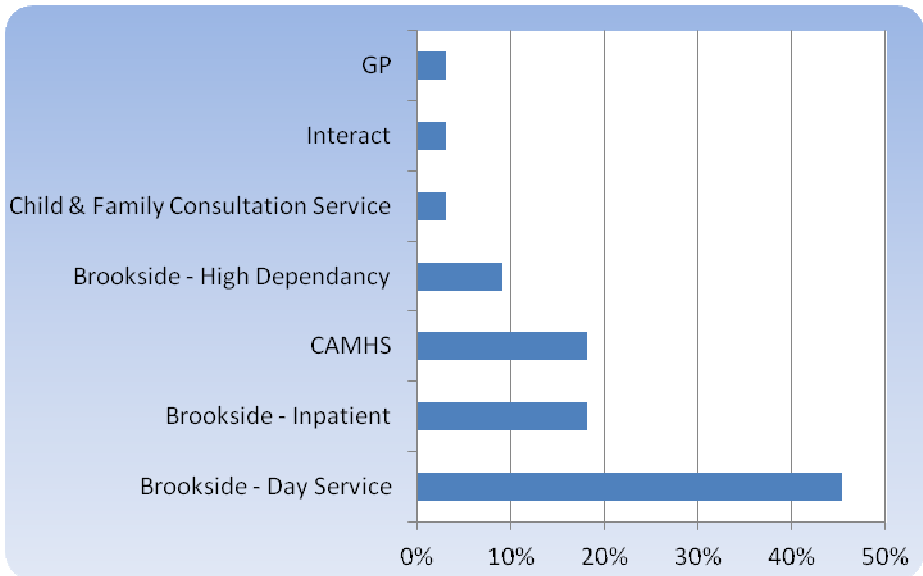
The Project Coordinator spent the first few months actively promoting Coping Through Football across the NELFT teams in each of the boroughs, through visits and presentations. This led to adult referrals from 22 sources, the two largest being the Community Recovery Teams and Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIP) each referring 17% of participants. The top five sources of referrals identified below accounted for 66% of all service user involvement.

Top 5 sources of all adult referrals



In viewing the breakdown across the Waltham Forest and Redbridge sessions it is worth noting that in Redbridge the main source of referrals was from the Community Recovery Teams (27%), inpatient unit (15%) and EIP (11%) whilst in Waltham Forest most referrals came from EIP (25%), Access and Brief Intervention Team (18%) and the Community Recovery Teams (15%). The number of referrals from GPs was surprisingly low given the amount of promotional work undertaken with this group of practitioners.

Source of young people’s referrals



For the young people's sessions the support from Brookside has been a key driver of attendance with the unit referring 73% of participants. The project has been valuable to the service users from the inpatient unit, providing them with an opportunity to leave the facility and participate in physical activity in a safe and secure community environment. It has also afforded the young people who use the facility as a day service access to the sessions and provided a link between primary and secondary services.

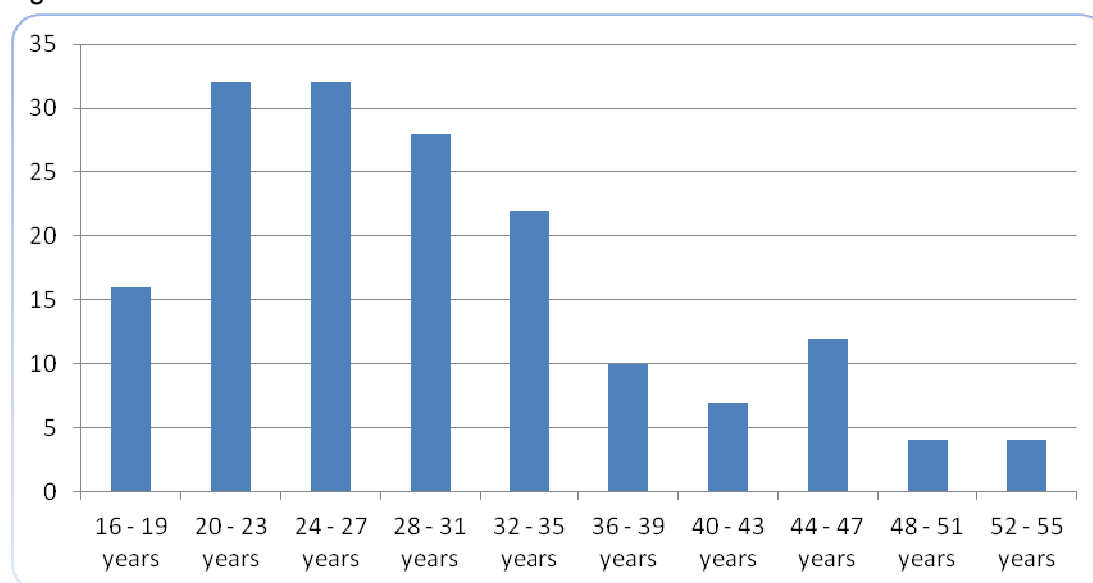
4.3 Service user demographics

During the first phase of Coping Through Football (2007-2010) the project was initially targeted at 18 – 35 year old men, as this was the age group with which NELFT services were seeking to improve their engagement levels. However, the appeal of the project was much wider than anticipated and referrals are now received from women and older men.

The project is currently promoted as being open to all mental health service users but, given its focus on football, it appears to be more attractive to men with only 7% of adult attendees being female. However, there is less of a gender gap for the young people's sessions where 38% of those attending were female.

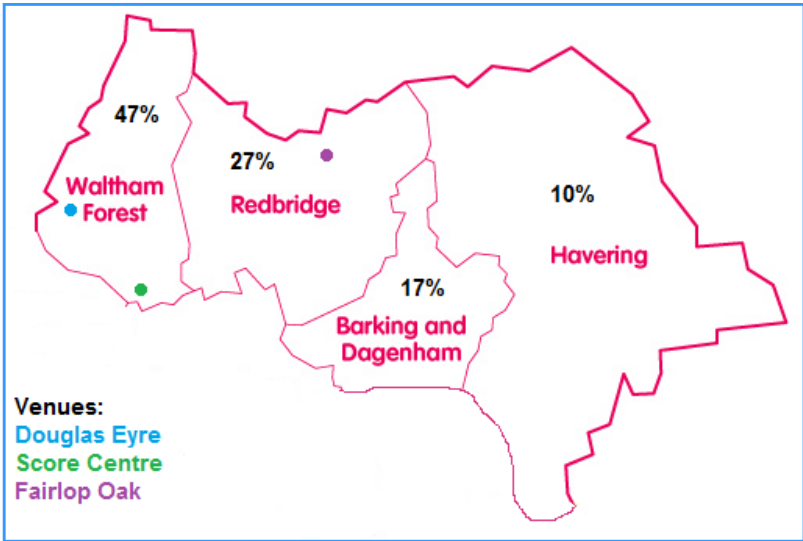
The age of the service users ranges from 13 – 17 years in the young people's group to 18 – 55 years in the adult sessions. As predicted, the majority of service users are aged 18 – 35 years, but there are 37 service users attending who are over this age group.

Age of adult service users



The service users' borough of origin shows that Waltham Forest residents comprise almost half of the service users and a quarter of participants attend from Redbridge. The higher attendance from Waltham Forest reflects the fact that two of the venues used are located in the borough and these are well established sessions. The Redbridge sessions have only been running for a year and whilst they are promoted to service users from Barking & Dagenham and Havering these residents have further to travel to reach the venues so this could account for the lower attendance figures.

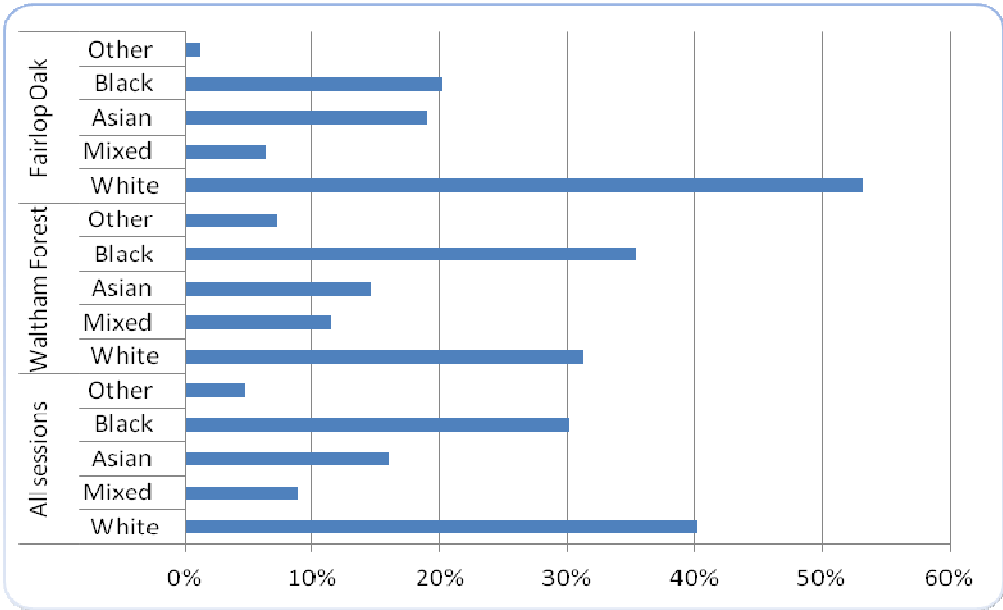
Origin of all service users



The young service users were drawn equally from across the four boroughs, reflecting the fact that the majority of referrals are made from the Brookside unit which caters for residents from all four NELFT boroughs.

Forty per cent of adult Coping Through Football participants are white. When compared to the 2011 census which indicates that London’s population is 60% white, it appears that there is an over representation of BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) participants attending the project. However, the 2011 ‘Count Me In’ census showed that mental health admission rates are higher than average among some minority ethnic groups, especially Black and White/Black Mixed groups. In contrast, admission rates are average or lower than average among the South Asian (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) and Chinese groups.

Ethnicity of adult service users

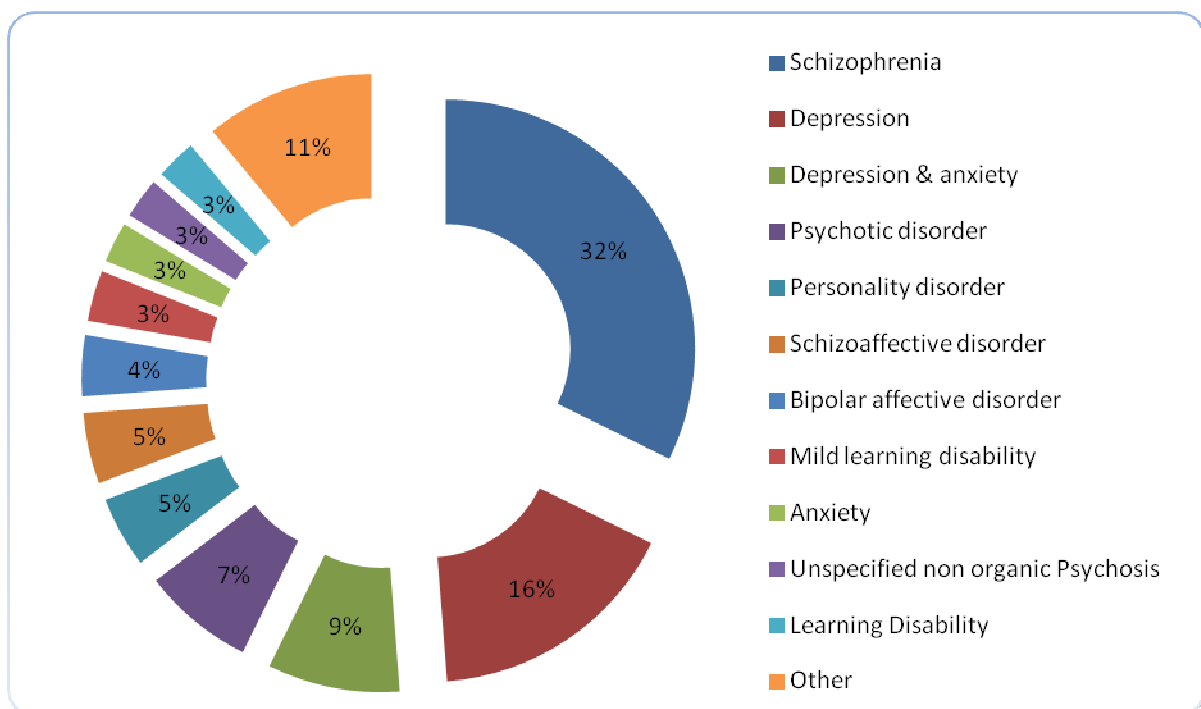


The ethnicity of the adult service users differs slightly between the Waltham Forest and Redbridge venues. Just over half of the service users at Fairlop Oak were White (53%), with 20% Black and 19% Asian. The BAME population in Redbridge is 61% which indicates that there is an under representation of BAME participants at the Fairlop sessions. However it must be noted that the BAME populations in Barking & Dagenham (46%) and Havering (14%) are significantly lower which could account for the difference. In Waltham Forest 35% of the service users were Black, 31% White and 15% Asian which indicates that there is an over representation of BAME participants.

The younger participants were predominantly White (56%) with 18% Asian and 12% Black.

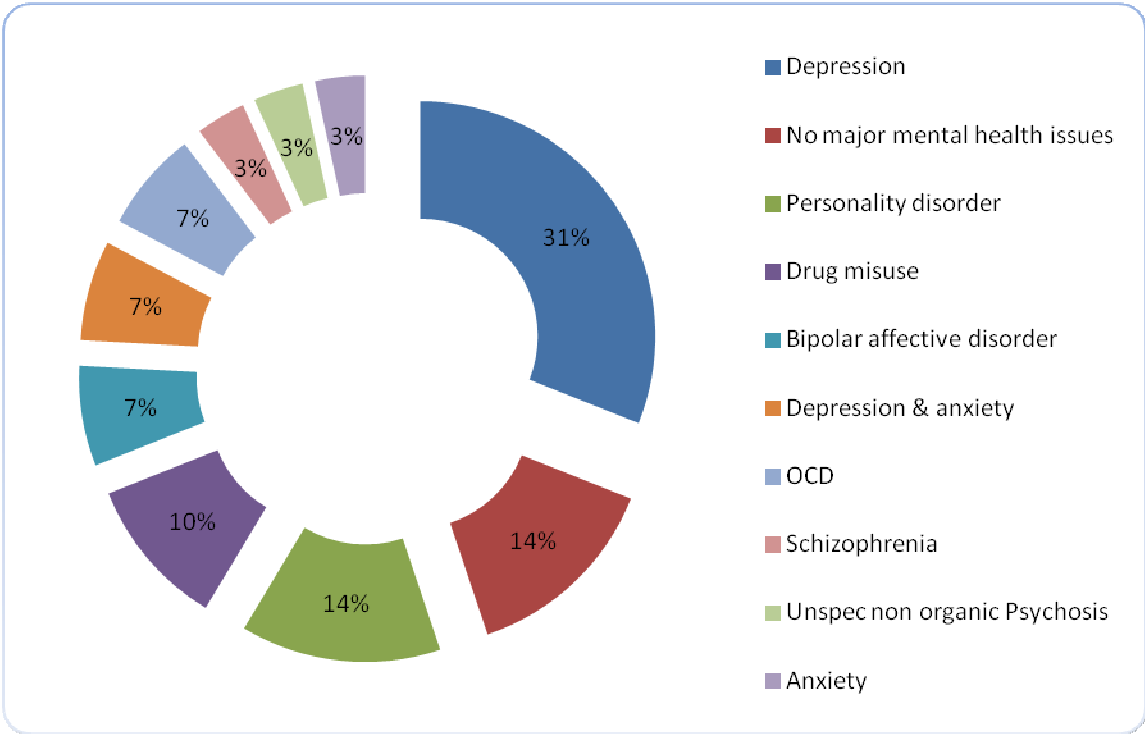
There are twenty different recorded diagnoses for the adult service users, with almost a third having a diagnosis of schizophrenia. A further quarter of participants have a diagnosis of depression or depression and anxiety.

Diagnoses of adult service users



There is reluctance amongst health professionals to classify a young person with a specific mental health diagnosis, which probably explains why there is less prevalence of schizophrenia or psychotic disorder amongst the younger service users.

Diagnoses of younger service users



4.4 Service user satisfaction

A satisfaction survey is circulated annually to service users. The December 2014 survey, completed by 24 participants, showed that 96% rated the football sessions as very good or excellent and 92% believed that CTF services had helped them to deal more effectively with their problems.

5. Impact

The most important measure of success is how the project has changed the lives of its participants. The Project Coordinator agrees an action plan with each participant with the intention of helping them to live more independent lives. Whilst the “on pitch” activities (i.e. the football activity itself) provide positive health and social benefits to service users, there is a substantial amount of work undertaken by project staff off the pitch to assist participants in achieving wider outcomes. Such measures include gaining access to education and training courses, achieving voluntary roles and obtaining part or full time employment.

5.1 Education / training

Twenty service users gained access to education and training courses. The education opportunities pursued by the service users have been varied, including basic literacy and ESOL courses through to people returning to degree courses in architecture and engineering. Participants have also used the skills and confidence gained through the sessions to enrol on vocational training courses such as IT, security license, catering, construction, counselling mentoring, teaching assistant and sports coaching. In many cases these courses have provided the knowledge and experience to enable service users to improve their employment chances.

Mark said: “I gained my boxing coaching qualification in 2012 and since then I have undertaken paid work as a boxing coach in a club and have also been employed by my former mental health team to teach boxing skills to service users.”

5.2 Volunteering

The Project Coordinator assisted nineteen service users in finding various volunteering roles relating to their interests including sports coaching, catering, retail and horticultural work.

Jordan said: “I had not studied or worked for over 15 years before joining the project but I have since attended a computing course and volunteered at both a charity shop and a horticultural project.”

5.3 Employment

The twelve service users who have returned to part or full time employment have secured posts such as warehouse manager, mechanic, gym customer advisor, security staff, painter and decorator, warehouse staff and intern at a social media company.

Ali said: “I have gained a number of qualifications and participated in employment courses and feel that this has helped me to develop methods to secure a job. I am currently employed and feel motivated to achieve my goals, which at one point seemed impossible due to how low I felt.”

5.4 Physical health and social outcomes

There were a number of self reported improvements in physical health including weight loss, improved diet and reduction in substance misuse. Some participants also noted that their social life had improved through meeting new friends at the project and socialising with them away from the sessions. As a result of improved physical health and confidence several service users reported that they had increased their participation levels in physical activity for example through joining a gym, swimming or playing in a football team with friends.

Yasmin said: “I am now involved in child care duties for family members and have the confidence to leave my house to visit friends. I am motivated to exercise at home and I have been able to cycle around my local area.”

5.5 Case studies

A number of case studies have also been written to capture participants' recovery journey and demonstrate the project's impact.

I suffered from Schizophrenia and would stay indoors all day because I was reluctant to go out during daylight hours. I had low self-esteem and so for many years my social life was non-existent. When it was suggested that I attend Coping Through Football I was quite nervous as I find it difficult to talk to others. By attending the group sessions, I found myself making progress by being able to talk to other members, my confidence levels increased and I began to get a real enjoyment from playing football.

Prior to Coping Through Football I was abusing drugs and alcohol, which stopped me from achieving anything as I would sit inside all day. I feel attending the sessions has helped me to resist the urge to drink, as my mind is occupied by being part of pleasant activities. When drinking I felt depressed, yet when playing football I feel better within myself, which has made me realise that I do not need to drink.

I used to occasionally attend the gym but the amount of exercise I performed was minimal. When I did exercise, I would tire very easily, yet now I have noticed an improvement in my fitness levels. I still attend the gym but now take part in other activities such as Badminton.

I had not worked for a number of years and found that I needed some sort of challenge. Since attending the group sessions I have secured a voluntary role

working at a printing company, which gives me great responsibility. I also volunteered for the British Heart Foundation, which made me feel important. Performing voluntary work has motivated me to eventually begin part or full-time employment.

I enrolled on a computing course; I have achieved my ITQ Level One status and am working towards gaining the ITQ Level Two. I feel this will help me in my pursuit of getting a job, and it also makes me feel more confident because I have gained new skills.

Coping Through Football gives me enjoyment, as I like having activities to participate in. I have noticed a great change in my confidence levels as I am now able to engage in a conversation with others, which at one point seemed impossible. I feel that my life has improved by attending the sessions and drinking is no longer an option for me.

There is also evidence that the project has had a positive impact upon the younger service users. Two of the participants have enrolled on a Sports and Football BTEC course representing a significant achievement for them given that prior to joining the project they were unable to attend school.

Another participant Tom commented: **“I come to Coping Through Football once a week and enjoy it. I get on with the other people....I've become fitter from it. I've been able to meet new people. I've gained muscles in my legs and I've lost weight.”** As his confidence increased he joined the larger Wednesday session which was a challenge: **“I was nervous at first, but I liked it in the end. My nerves left as I played.”**

Since attending the sessions he also feels better about sport: **“At school in PE I join in with the basketball. I never used to like it but now I do.”**

His mother also noticed a positive change: **“Coping Through Football has helped him, he is happier and it is not hard for him to smile anymore. His general persona has also changed. Before, when he was bullied, he went off school, but now he is really into his studies again.”**

He concluded: **“I have no more worries, nothing to feel sad about. I am going to a new school and enjoying it better.... Football helps if I've got any problems, I can let go of them.”**

NB All names in this section have been changed to protect the identity of service users

6. Summary of achievements

It's more than just football

The aim of Coping Through Football is to use football as a means of engaging with service users in order to improve their physical and mental wellbeing and help them to lead more independent lives. The partnership between sport and health professionals from London Playing Fields Foundation, Leyton Orient Trust and North East London NHS Foundation Trust has seen the three organisations working towards the shared goal of using the experience of playing football to provide a service with a difference. Whilst the aim is to organise highly enjoyable sessions the real value comes from the benefits that the project provides beyond the football sessions, where service users are helped to access opportunities to attain qualifications, secure voluntary placements or employment and where wider health and social outcomes can be achieved.

Widening the reach

The fact that 60% of service users are BAME demonstrates that the project has been successful in engaging with a group that is statistically more likely to be diagnosed with mental health problems and is also more likely to disengage from mainstream mental health services, which in turn leads to further social exclusion and a deterioration in their mental health. This would indicate that Coping Through Football has continued to provide an attractive alternative service for this client group.

Improved data collection

The recruitment of a part-time Administrator and a Research Assistant has facilitated an improved system of data collection. Information from the baseline and six monthly assessments and action plan outcomes is collated on a regular basis by the Administrator and made accessible to all project staff and reported to the quarterly Steering Group meetings. The data helps the group to monitor progress and identify areas for further work as well as informing the annual evaluation reports.

Extended impact

This year the increased capacity afforded by the new investment from Wembley National Stadium Trust and Dr Mortimer & Theresa Sackler Foundation has enabled the project to successfully extend its reach into new boroughs and to engage with a younger age group. Whilst it took some time for the additional adult sessions in Redbridge to establish themselves, the attendance levels have steadily increased and a regular core of service users now attend. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service team has arranged for Coping Through Football to form part of the unit's timetable and this has assisted in the referrals of young people to the Wednesday sessions. Work will be undertaken in the coming months to encourage more youth referrals from the community setting.

Greater public recognition

The receipt of awards such as the UEFA Grassroots Award 2014, the London Football Awards Community Project of the Year 2015 and the Mental Health Hero Award presented to LPFF's Chief Executive Alex Welsh show that the project is well regarded as an example of best practice.

Notes

Further information on the project is available from:

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