

COPING THROUGH FOOTBALL

TEN YEAR REPORT | 2018



Contents

01

– Foreword

02

– Introduction
– The need
– Project origins

03

– Project outcomes
– Project timeline

04

– Impact
– The Sessions

05

– Beneficiaries
– Research

06

– What makes Coping
Through Football work
– The future

Foreword

Those who play, follow, love or work in the game will appreciate how football has the power to improve and transform lives. Its benefits, which extend well beyond the pitch can have a significant impact on health and social issues. I have seen for myself how it can improve physical health, help make friends for life, raise aspirations, increase confidence and bring communities together. And that is why The Football Association is so pleased to host the 10th Anniversary of the magnificent Coping Through Football project.

With mental health issues affecting one in four of us there is a real need for innovation around improving preventative and recovery measures. Coping Through Football demonstrates how a multi-agency approach involving the NHS (in the form of NELFT) and two sporting charities, London Playing Fields Foundation and Leyton Orient Trust, can use football to engage with and improve the lives of one of society's most marginalised groups. What these three partners have done over the last ten years has been remarkable and is certainly worthy of emulation.

The thing that makes Coping Through Football so special is that it works hand in glove with NELFT to provide four London boroughs with a service with a difference. It uses the environment around the football experience to help people who have deteriorating physical health, low confidence and self-esteem and diminished social skills to get their lives back on track. As you will read in this report some of the results have been stunning and we congratulate all involved.

Greg Clarke

Chairman, The Football Association

“

At the project we encourage each other to get fitter and stronger. It's a good community group, we chat and have a laugh. I'm working part time about 16 hours per week now and I find that work is good for my mind.

“

Since attending Coping Through Football I feel that half of the 'weight' has lifted from me. I feel 'lighter' in myself. I enjoy making friends and I try to be positive. There's a huge improvement in my life.

Introduction

Coping Through Football is an innovative project that focuses on the recovery of young people and adults experiencing mental health problems with the intention of helping them to live more independently. In doing so the project is seeking to transform and add sustained value to existing community mental health services. Coping Through Football highlights the value of multi-agency working by demonstrating how two charities (London Playing Fields Foundation and Leyton Orient Trust) can collaborate with the NHS (NELFT) to use football to improve the lives of one of society's most marginalised groups.

The annual economic and social cost of mental health problems is estimated to be

£105bn

23%

of the national disease burden is attributable to mental health

Suicide is the leading cause of death of men aged

15-49yrs

50%

of all mental health problems are established by the age of 14

The need

Mental ill health represents the largest single cause of disability in the UK. One in four adults experience at least one diagnosable mental health issue per year and tragically suicide is the leading cause of death of men aged 15-49 years. The annual economic and social cost of mental health problems is estimated to be £105 billion, yet despite mental illness accounting for 23% of the national disease burden it only receives 13% of the NHS budget. For those suffering from long term conditions they are at risk of dying an average of 15-20 years earlier than the general population with two thirds of these deaths being from preventable illnesses including heart disease and cancer, largely through smoking. People with a long standing mental health problem are twice as likely to smoke as the general population. With 50% of all mental health problems established by the age of 14, rising to 75% by the age of 24, early intervention and timely access to good quality care is vital.

Project origins

Driven by the obvious needs, the project stemmed from an approach that London Playing Fields Foundation (LPFF) made to NELFT (formerly North East London Foundation Trust) in 2005 to explore ways in which football could be used as part of a recovery model for people in the London Borough of Waltham Forest who were experiencing significant and more enduring mental health issues. With a track record of designing, developing and delivering successful sport based projects where the focus was on wider social outcomes, LPFF believed that a similar partnership approach would work with mental health.

From the outset the intention was to be transformational and to produce a project that would in time become part of mainstream services and not another “sticking plaster” intervention, here today and gone tomorrow when the funding expired. It was therefore critical that the project had clinical credibility, was shaped by a robust evaluation methodology that built on previous evidence of a positive link between exercise and mental health and was delivered by coaches in a way that did not focus purely on football outcomes.

In the local context of Waltham Forest one of the challenges for NELFT at the time was the lack of engagement from Black 18-25 year old male service users with health professionals. It was envisaged that providing football sessions led by Leyton Orient Trust (LOT) coaches within a community setting would stimulate better engagement as they would not be identified with the stigma frequently associated with mental health services. To ensure that the project had sound clinical foundations fifteen months were spent ensuring that clear NELFT governance protocols covering contact, referral and clinical review were put in place. Pilot sessions began in June 2006 at Leyton Orient’s SCORE complex whilst external funding was sought until the project was officially launched by the Minister for Sport Gerry Sutcliffe in December 2007 at The Emirates Stadium.

Project outcomes

With the overall aim of helping participants live more independent lives, the project sets out to:

- ▶ Improve physical health and well-being
- ▶ Enhance self-esteem and confidence
- ▶ Enhance opportunities for improving interpersonal and social skills
- ▶ Increase service user confidence and ability to access mainstream opportunities within their wider community
- ▶ Reduce reliance on alcohol, cigarettes and recreational drugs
- ▶ Provide a route back to employment, volunteering, education and training
- ▶ Enhance more positive relationships with health professionals
- ▶ Reduce the use of acute care services.

Impact

In Phase 1 (2007 – 2010) the impact on 150 service users who were referred to the scheme was remarkable, with 44% of participants moving on to education/training, volunteering and employment. Eight out of ten service users classified as having a dependence on illicit drugs and alcohol, reported that involvement in the project had helped them to remain abstinent or reduce their consumption.

The Evaluation Report produced in 2010 reported that Coping Through Football:

- Provided a service with a difference
- Helped service users get back a sense of identity
- Addressed addiction problems and reduced non-prescribed drug usage
- Promoted smoking cessation and healthier lifestyles
- Enhanced the health and well-being of service users
- Opened up the social world
- Enhanced empowerment

Building on this momentum in Phase 2 (2010 – 2013), referrals increased considerably from Early Intervention Teams and IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) with continued high rates of participation from black and minority ethnic groups (who statistically are 6.6 times more likely to be admitted as inpatients or detained under the Mental Health Act).

Having secured succession funding for Phase 3 (2014 – 2017), Coping Through Football expanded into the other NELFT boroughs of Redbridge, Havering and Barking and Dagenham (with a combined population of just under one million) and it was also extended to include 11 -17 year olds via Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The referral of participants has widened to include primary care providers such as local GPs and links to acute and inpatient services have been further extended to include escorted provision from both adolescent and adult wards. The project enjoys good links with CAMHS and the recruitment of more young people has become a priority for Phase 4 (2017 – 2020) where the appointment of a Peer Recovery Worker will make a real difference.

The Sessions

Philosophy

The football sessions are what draws the service user in and they mark the place where the interface between the service user and their peers and health professionals initially happens. The focus is not on football outcomes such as the creation of a mental health team or league but on the personal and interpersonal aspects of an individual’s journey to health. The project is strongly aligned with the view that more people with mental health problems will recover by having a good quality of life which entails developing a greater capacity to manage their own lives and having stronger social relationships, a greater sense of purpose and the skills they need for living and working. This is based on the premise that the more integrated the individual is, the less disconnected they will become thus increasing the likelihood of a sustained recovery.

Session delivery

The six sessions per week which are free of charge and delivered on high quality community pitches are attractive to participants. The project is open to participants of all ages and abilities (ages 13-17 and 18+ participate separately). The Project Coordinator (who is a NELFT occupational therapist), the Peer Recovery Worker and the Leyton Orient Trust coaches work hard to provide a welcoming and supportive environment in which participants can establish new friendships, improve their levels of fitness, increase their confidence and receive support from qualified clinicians. The coach aims for maximum involvement with an emphasis on enhancing self-esteem so as the session ends the participants leave with a greater sense of self-worth and achievement.

Benefits beyond the pitch

The Project Coordinator uses the opportunity to monitor service users’ mental health; updating and identifying any concerns. The support provided to participants extends beyond the football sessions with the Project Coordinator working with them to promote a fuller, more independent and healthy lifestyle. These include a programme of health and well-being workshops which address issues such as smoking cessation, diet and nutrition and improving fitness. Dr Imitiaz Ahmad (GP Lead for the project) provides regular football themed workshops on topics suggested by service users.

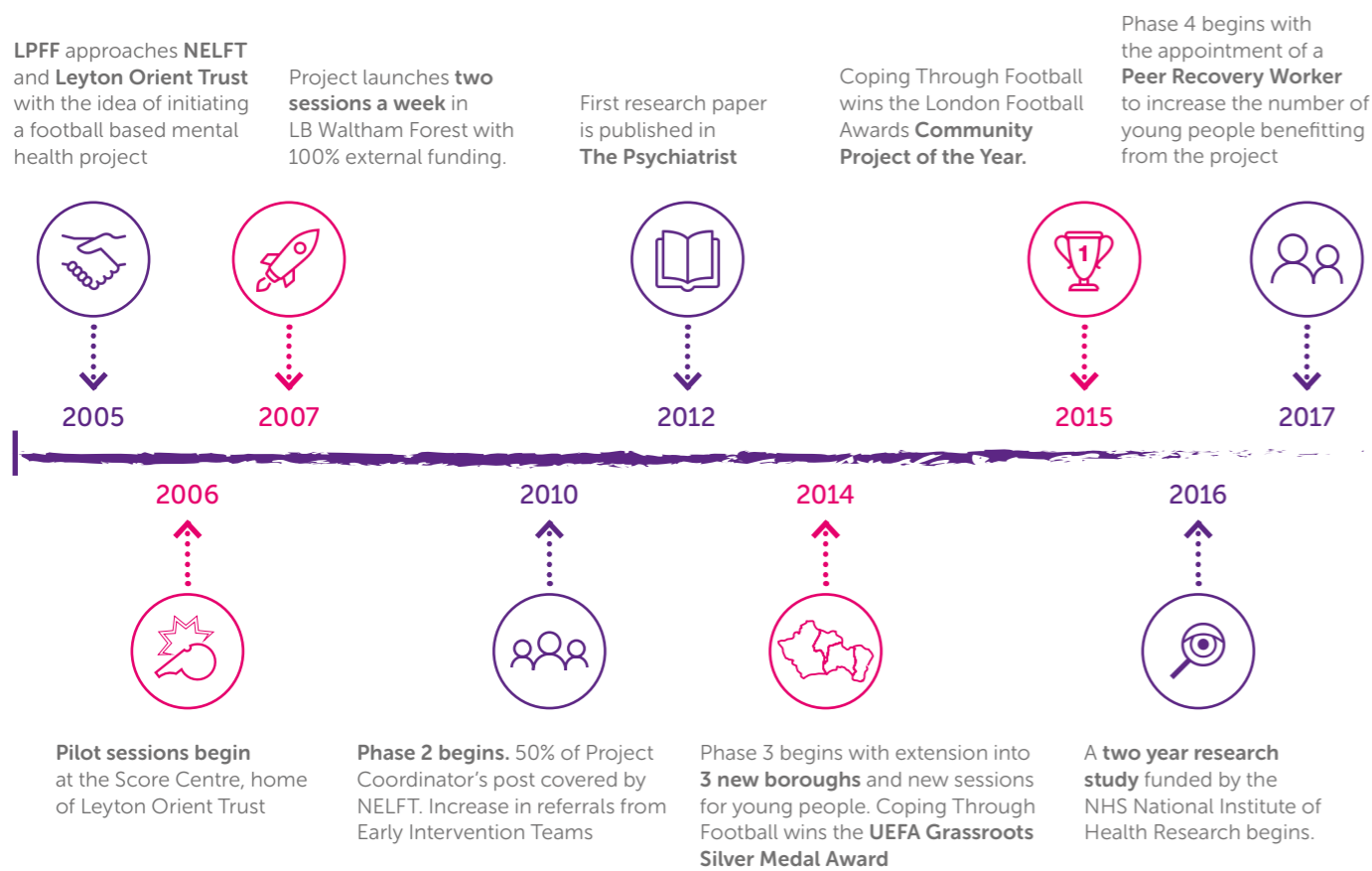
In addition, on starting with the project and also at review, participants are invited to discuss their aspirations for work, training and study, and identify other activities that they may choose to explore to support their recovery.

The Project Coordinator and Peer Recovery Worker have capacity to be responsive and offer support. In this way the project can influence and encourage the individual’s recovery beyond the football sessions, resulting in positive vocational and educational outcomes.



I’m feeling positive in myself and I’ve been working part time. I’d like to start a children’s project using multi-sports to improve their confidence. So Coping Through Football keeps me looking forward and bettering myself.

PROJECT TIMELINE



BENEFICIARIES

A year in the life of Coping Through Football

Based on 2017-18 figures

The number of:



Gender:



Outcomes:



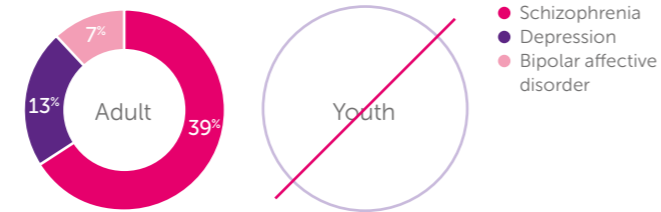
Research

There is growing evidence that football-based public health interventions can have a positive impact on emotional, physical and social well-being in people with mental health problems. There are three published studies of Coping Through Football making it the most widely studied scheme of its kind. These describe the range of benefits participants ascribe to the project and how they perceive these to occur.

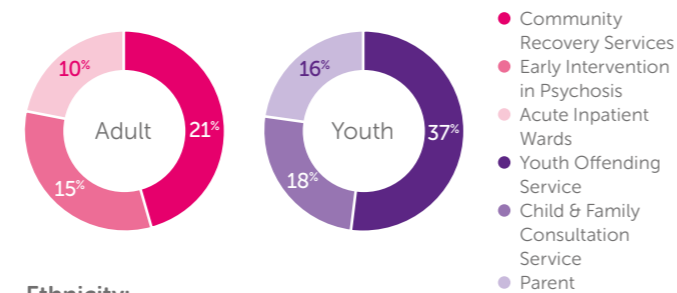
In the first in-depth study, "A role for football in mental health: the Coping Through Football project"¹, participants felt that the project offered a very different experience to previously accessed services as it was not problem focused and offered an opportunity for personal change and development.

They described how football offered a reconnection with a pre-illness identity: often memories of football were strongly associated with enjoyment and a positive sense of self. A safe and supportive environment was one of the explicit aims of the project and facilitators described their efforts to achieve this. Perhaps most crucially it helped open up the social world for many previously isolated and lonely individuals who found the structure it offered daily life and the potential for deep and genuine friendship invaluable.

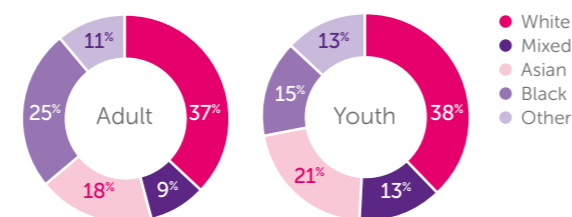
Main Diagnoses:



Main referral sources:



Ethnicity:



Many service users highlighted how their friendship network had expanded. The consequence of both the physical and psychological benefits to fitness, health and enjoyment were highlighted by all participants as key benefits of attending the project. These might be weight loss, reducing smoking, improvements to their performance at sessions, or the very widely perceived benefits to mood and motivation. Some referrers and coaches saw these perceived benefits as central to maintaining the motivation to attend for individuals who can find this challenging. One of the strongest outcomes to emerge was increased self-confidence/self-esteem and even what might be termed empowerment.

A two year research study began in April 2016 under the National Institute of Health Research Public Health Practice Evaluation Scheme. It has:

- Recorded the existing evidence for the effectiveness and feasibility of football based mental health schemes²
- Evidenced that the implementation of Coping Through Football is associated with improvements in mental health and physical health outcomes³

- Identified the social benefits of Coping Through Football and calculated the costs and benefits associated with the delivery of the project

The evaluation team from University College London includes Dr Oliver Mason (project lead), Professor David Osborn, Dr Jessica Deighton and Dr Bettina Friedrich and Michael Parsonage at the Centre for Mental Health. A comprehensive research report will be published by the evaluation team in Autumn 2018.



Going to Coping Through Football has meant that I have to be around strangers which is a huge step for me. I never used to speak to anybody at all. Now I can say "Hello" to people I know and even speak to the new ones I don't know who come to football."

What makes Coping Through Football work

• Being underpinned by clinical credibility.

The contact, referral, assessment, review and governance procedures have been drawn up in conjunction with NELFT and critically the project has the full backing of the Trust's Leadership Team and Board. The referral pathway is controlled by clinicians making it easy to transfer the model to other NHS Trusts looking for more innovative ways of reducing the reliance on acute care, as well of promoting more recovery led approaches to service user care.

• Being driven by an evaluation methodology.

Established by Dr Oliver Mason, Research Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology, University College London, the clear evaluation framework recognises what success looks like and how it will be measured.

• Creating an inclusive environment.

The use of good quality community facilities where everyone is welcome and service users enjoy a sense of belonging is crucial. Running for 50 weeks in the year, the sessions are not 'traditional' mental health sessions but are about coming together in a "normal" way to play football. The atmosphere is relaxed, non-judgemental and friendly and for those service users feeling anxious the sessions provide a stress-free environment.

• Managing the football experience.

Where possible, the same LOT coach, accompanied by the Project Coordinator, is constantly present and this provides reassuring continuity for the participants. The coach is suitably, trained, qualified and experienced and coaches to improve feelings of self-worth rather winning football matches.

The footballing abilities vary considerably across the group so the coach manages the difference to ensure that everyone has a fulfilling experience. Participants expressing a wish to play more formal competitive matches in addition to the Coping Through Football sessions are introduced to local mainstream clubs.

• The power of partnership.

As the project essentially focuses on the recovery of people with long term mental health issues, a multi-agency approach is essential if participants are to be assisted in living more independently. Both charities have outstanding reputations in their fields and have extensive experience of using sport to achieve wider health and social outcomes. LPFF manages the overall delivery of the project as well as playing a key role in promoting it at a strategic level, securing funding and providing facilities. LOT provides the coaches, one of the coaching venues and access to regular Leyton Orient FC home fixtures. NELFT provides the clinical governance covering contact, referrals, review and exit route protocols. It employs the Project Coordinator and part-time Administrator and Peer Recovery Worker who support her role.

The future

Having reached the ten year milestone we remain committed to continuous improvement of the project and especially to the contribution it makes to young people experiencing the onset of mental health problems.

Looking forward we have two main goals. Firstly for Coping Through Football to become fully integrated within mental health service delivery, so it is less reliant on external funding. Secondly, via the production of a toolkit, we want to promote the Coping Through Football model to other trusts and their local football partners, meaning more people experiencing mental health problems can have their lives transformed through the power of football.

For those of you who have been informed and inspired by this report we would love to hear from you.



Before I came to the project I didn't really have any friends, just my family. Now I've made friends with people here and we keep in touch outside of the group. I feel that I'm physically fitter, I've got confident and I can talk to anyone now. I was unemployed for 7 years and have now got myself a full time paid job.

Notes

¹ A role for football in mental health: The Coping Through Football project (2012) OJ Mason, R Holt. The Psychiatrist 36, 290-293.

² "What is the score?" A review of football-based public mental health interventions (2017) B Friedrich, OJ Mason. Journal of Public Mental Health 16, 144-158.

³ Evaluation of the Coping Through Football Project: Physical Activity and Psychosocial Outcomes (2017) B Friedrich, OJ Mason. The Open Public Health Journal 10.



Funders

Thanks to our funders for their support

Phase 1

- Football Foundation
- City Bridge Trust
- Henry Smith Charity
- Capital Volunteering
- London Catalyst
- Trusthouse Charitable Foundation

Phase 2

- Man Group Charitable Trust
- Henry Smith Charity
- LBWF
- NELFT

Phase 3

- The Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation
- Wembley National Stadium Trust
- NELFT

Phase 4

- The Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation
- LB Redbridge Public Health
- NELFT

Further information



Alex Welsh

Chief Executive

E alex.welsh@lpff.org.uk

T 020 7323 0331



Barbara Armstrong

Joint Lead OT and Social Inclusion
Lead Waltham Forest

E barbara.armstrong@nelft.nhs.uk

T 0300 555 1200 | **Ext** 68484



Neil Taylor

Chief Executive

E neil.taylor@leytonorienttrust.org.uk

T 020 8556 5973