



Annual Report 2025/26

***“Working with communities to
learn how to serve them best”***



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Statement from our Managing Director

Ben Rigby

MANAGING DIRECTOR

"I look back at the past year with an enormous sense of pride. It has been a brilliant year for Sporting Communities and one defined by creativity, collaboration and a determination to find new and better ways of supporting young people and communities.

Like organisations across the country, we have continued to face significant challenges. Rising costs, reducing budgets and growing pressure on public and voluntary services have created an increasingly difficult environment. At the same time, we have heard directly from young people and communities who feel frustrated by the national political direction and increasingly concerned about their safety, opportunities and future.

Rather than allowing these challenges to limit our ambition, we have used them as a catalyst for creative thinking. They have encouraged us to examine our work closely, strengthen relationships with partners who share our values and consider how our resources, knowledge and experience can be used as effectively as possible.

Our staff, volunteers and Board have remained unified around a shared purpose, ensuring that our vision of helping others remains at the forefront of every decision we make. Their creativity, compassion and commitment have enabled us to respond positively to uncertainty while continuing to provide high-quality, ethical and meaningful support.

I would like to thank all our funders, partners, supporters and community stakeholders for the trust they place in us and for the vital role they play in our work. I would also like to thank the young people, families and communities who continue to share their experiences, ideas and aspirations with us. Your voices shape our organisation and inspire us to keep learning, improving and striving for greater impact.

Together, we have shown what can be achieved when people unite around shared values and a genuine commitment to creating safer, stronger and more hopeful communities."



1,500

Hours of community engagement

16,360

Direct engagements in positive community activities

166%

Increase in usage of our community assets

Company Overview



COMMUNITY SERVICES
Engaging people in the hearts of their communities:

- Community Sport
- Youth Work
- Health & Wellbeing

Our community services also include our national youth voice network:

- Youth Voice
- Social Action



TRAINING & EDUCATION

Giving people the skills and knowledge to gain employment and excel in their career:

- Online training
- Workshops
- Alternative provision
- Enterprise



COMMUNITY ASSETS

Developing and sustaining underused public assets, or supporting local groups in their asset acquisition:

- Asset renovation
- Asset management
- Asset transfer consultancy



Values

Sporting Communities are pioneers of innovative community, youth work and sport development practices. As an ethical, not-for-profit company we examine our behaviour towards the outside world taking into consideration morality and ethical reasoning. We are committed to developing cost-effective, timely and professional services that benefit communities and inform future services.

Mission

Our work is powered by three dynamic business arms, shown in the diagram above. Each plays a unique role, but together they create a powerful engine for innovation, value and lasting change, delivering sustainable, cost-effective impact for our partners and stakeholders.

Our step by step approach ensures that communities have a long term, sustainable plan, building suitable foundations for projects and services that go way above and beyond expectations; developing positive cultures and changing people's lives.

Theory of Change

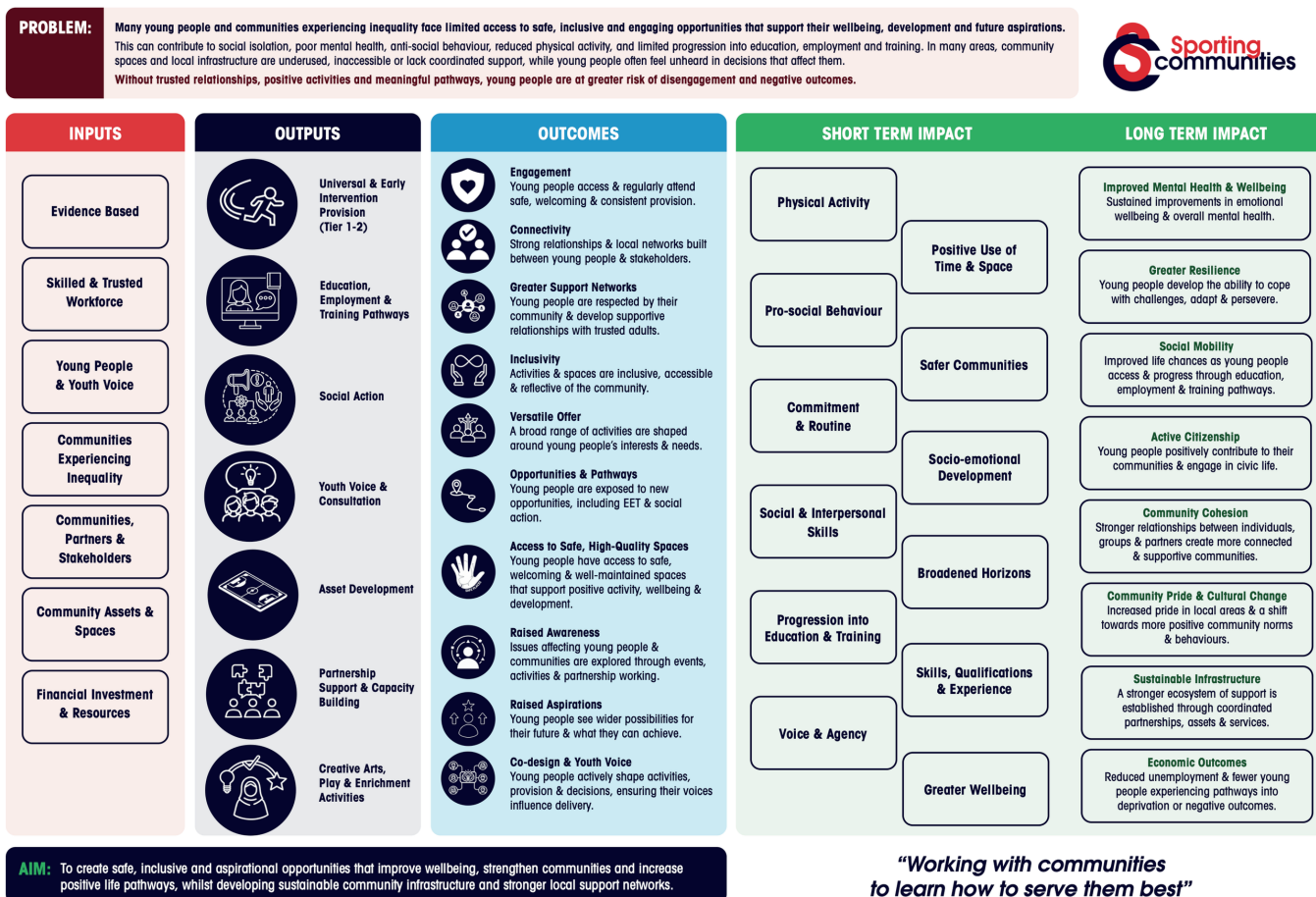
This year, we reviewed our work in depth and redeveloped Sporting Communities' Theory of Change. The renewed model connects our resources, workforce, partnerships, community assets and youth voice with the activities we deliver and the changes we aim to create.

All areas of our work now link back to the model. It guides how we design projects, develop staff, manage assets, build partnerships, deliver consultancy and measure impact, ensuring the organisation works consistently towards shared outcomes.

The Theory of Change identifies the progress we expect to see, including stronger engagement, greater inclusion, trusted relationships, raised aspirations and increased opportunities for young people to influence decisions. Over time, these contribute to improved wellbeing, resilience, social mobility, safer communities and stronger community cohesion.

It also strengthens our evaluation by connecting participation data, WELLBY findings, case studies and community voice with the long-term impact we are working to achieve.

“OUR THEORY OF CHANGE BRINGS EVERY ASPECT OF OUR WORK TOGETHER AROUND ONE SHARED AIM: CREATING SAFE, INCLUSIVE AND ASPIRATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT IMPROVE WELLBEING, STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES AND OPEN POSITIVE PATHWAYS.”



Community Services



12% ↑

increase in women and girls participation

44%

of our participants from Global Majority backgrounds



Community engagement remains at the heart of Sporting Communities' work. Throughout the year, we have created inclusive opportunities for young people, families and wider communities to become active, build relationships and access trusted support, particularly across Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire.

Community Sport

Sport has continued to be one of our most effective tools for bringing people together, but every session is designed with a wider social purpose. Our place-based youth sport activities take place in parks, courts and open spaces, often in areas affected by anti-social behaviour or where young people have limited access to safe and affordable opportunities.

Whatever the weather, our teams provide a consistent and trusted presence. These sessions give young people opportunities to be active, build friendships, develop confidence and form positive relationships with youth workers. They also help young people make constructive use of local spaces, feel safer in their communities and access further support when needed.

Our wider community sport offer has included walking football to help adults remain active, build friendships and reduce isolation, alongside play activities in parks and family hubs that bring children and families together. These programmes show that community sport is about much more than physical activity: it can improve wellbeing, strengthen belonging and help create safer, more connected and resilient communities.

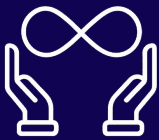


Inclusive Engagement

A particular focus this year has been increasing participation among people who are often underrepresented or excluded from traditional sporting opportunities. Through inclusive, community-based sessions, we have engaged more young women and girls, as well as people from marginalised communities, creating environments that feel safe, welcoming and responsive to their needs.

We have listened carefully to the barriers people face, adapted how and where activities are delivered, and worked with trusted local partners to build confidence and encourage sustained involvement. This has helped more participants feel that community sport is something they can access, enjoy and shape for themselves.

We have also worked with local partners to reduce practical barriers such as cost, travel, equipment and lack of awareness. By bringing accessible opportunities into familiar community settings, we are helping more young people and families participate regularly and feel that these activities are truly for them.



“ I ENJOY SPORTS, SO IT’S NICE TO HAVE THE CHANCE TO PLAY BASKETBALL, FOOTBALL AND OTHER GAMES WHERE THERE’S NO JUDGEMENT. IT DOESN’T MATTER WHAT YOUR ABILITY IS. EVERYONE GETS INVOLVED AND HAS FUN. ”

Creative Opportunities

Creative and recreational activities form an important part of our centre-based youth offer, giving young people different ways to relax, connect and express themselves. Sessions include arts and crafts, digital gaming, board games and playing cards, providing inclusive opportunities that appeal to a wide range of interests, personalities and abilities.

These activities create safe, welcoming and low-pressure environments where young people can build friendships, develop confidence and enjoy positive time with others. They can also support emotional wellbeing by giving young people space to switch off from everyday pressures, experience a sense of achievement and take part in activities that help them feel calm, included and valued.

The informal nature of these sessions is equally important. Sharing a creative activity or playing a game can make it easier for young people to begin conversations with trusted adults, explore issues that matter to them and talk about experiences or challenges in their lives at a pace that feels comfortable. This enables our youth workers to listen, offer appropriate support and identify when a young person may need further help.

By combining creativity, play, social connection and trusted relationships, our centre-based offer provides much more than activities. It creates spaces where young people can be themselves, strengthen their wellbeing and feel supported as they navigate the things happening in their lives.



“ I’VE MADE NEW FRIENDS THROUGH THE SESSIONS. BEFORE I CAME, I DIDN’T KNOW MANY PEOPLE OUTSIDE MY CLASS, AND WAS SCARED OF PLAYING OUT. NOW I FEEL SAFE AND MORE CONFIDENT TALKING TO OTHERS. ”



Youth Safety

We have continued to expand our contribution to youth safety through detached youth work, outreach, serious youth violence services and our Community Reassurance approach. Together, these provide much-needed early intervention and targeted support for young people facing heightened risks, including exploitation, violence, exclusion and involvement in anti-social behaviour.

Community Reassurance brings together visible, trusted youth provision, positive activities, local intelligence and strong partnership working to help

young people and residents feel safer in their communities. Rather than responding only after problems occur, the approach focuses on prevention, relationship-building and creating a consistent, reassuring presence in places where concerns have been identified.

Our teams create trusted, non-judgemental and safe spaces where young people can speak openly, access positive alternatives and receive support before challenges escalate. By listening to young people and communities, we can better understand local concerns, identify emerging issues and adapt our delivery to the needs of each area.

We have worked closely with Police and Crime Commissioners, police forces and constabularies, national youth organisations and local partners to identify and engage young people who are most in need. These relationships help ensure our services are informed by current intelligence, delivered safely and aligned with recognised best practice, while remaining responsive to young people's lived experiences.

We have also continued to train and support other youth providers, strengthening their confidence and ability to engage young people at risk effectively, ethically and safely. By sharing our frontline experience, evidence and learning, we are contributing to local priorities and wider national conversations about Community Reassurance, youth safety, prevention and the role of trusted community organisations.

This approach ensures that young people's experiences not only shape the support they receive, but also influence how services, policies and systems respond to the challenges affecting their lives and communities.



9.3%↓

Reduction in ASB
across our
combined areas
of work*

86%↑

Increase in
engaged young
people reporting
feeling safe



*Comparing the latest 12 months in the areas we operate with the average of the preceding two years using Police.uk data

Youth Voice and Social Action

Underpinning all of our work is a commitment to listening. We have continued to give young people and communities meaningful opportunities to share their experiences, identify local priorities and engage directly with decision-makers. By ensuring that people are not only consulted but supported to influence change, we are helping services, spaces and strategies become more responsive to the communities they are intended to serve.

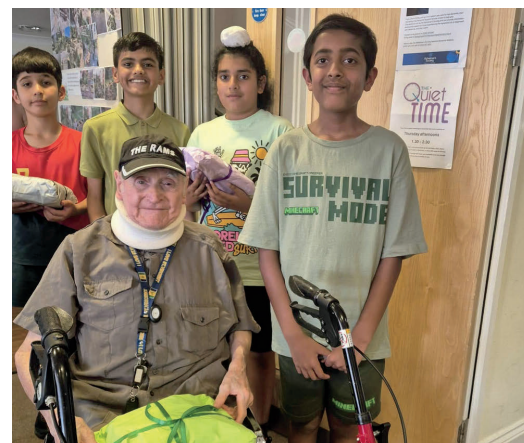
This year has been particularly successful in turning listening into meaningful action. We have supported young people not only to share their views, but to design and deliver social action projects that respond directly to the issues they care about in their schools and communities.

These projects have included creating sensory rooms within schools, leading anti-bullying and mental health initiatives, preparing care packages for vulnerable adults, organising community clean-ups, repairing and improving local spaces, and developing road safety campaigns. Through this work, young people have gained confidence, leadership skills and practical experience, while seeing that their ideas can create visible and lasting change.

We have also worked with young people to understand how our own activities can become more inclusive, welcoming and safe. Their feedback has helped us identify barriers, improve delivery and create spaces where more young people feel comfortable taking part and expressing themselves.

15

Social Action
Projects
delivered by
young people



“ SEEING OUR IDEA BECOME
REAL MADE ME FEEL PROUD ”



Listening to the Community

Alongside our work with young people, we have continued to listen to wider communities and support residents to identify local needs and priorities. By co-designing initiatives with the people who will benefit from them, we can develop stronger funding applications and ensure that new projects are genuinely community-led rather than imposed from outside.

A powerful example of this approach can be seen in Normanton.

Following consultation with more than 300 local people through surveys, focus groups and interviews, our team brought together a consortium of 11 partners to develop a shared response to the priorities residents identified. The consortium successfully secured funding through the East Midlands Combined County Authority Mayor's Fund for a holistic programme designed to engage and support local people, create much-needed opportunities and help residents strengthen their community.



Our approach to youth and community voice is rooted in a simple principle: listening should lead to action. By giving people the support, resources and opportunities to shape change, we are helping communities develop solutions that reflect their own experiences, strengths and ambitions.



Training and Workforce Development

Developing confident, skilled and compassionate people remains central to Sporting Communities' approach. We recognise that the quality of support young people receive is directly influenced by the knowledge, confidence and values of the people working alongside them. Throughout the year, we have therefore continued to invest in the development of professionals, volunteers and young people themselves through our Sustaining Communities team.

It is equally important that young people can see clear pathways into education, training, volunteering and employment. Awareness of different careers is only the first step; young people also need positive experiences, trusted guidance and practical opportunities that help them believe those pathways are achievable. By combining workforce training with leadership development, work experience, volunteering and careers-based activities, we aim to ensure that young people can explore their interests, build relevant skills and take meaningful steps towards their future.

Our approach therefore has two connected aims: to strengthen the workforce supporting young people, and to create progression routes through which young people can become volunteers, leaders, students and employees themselves. This helps build a more skilled and representative workforce while giving young people the confidence, experience and opportunity to pursue positive futures.

Building a Stronger Workforce

Through our CIMSPA-accredited Training Academy, we have continued to deliver our Introduction to Youth Work programme to people working with young people in a wide range of settings. The course develops practical understanding of relationship-building, safeguarding, inclusion, participation and creating safe, trusted spaces.



The quality of our training provision was recognised when our Training Academy received the maximum three-star rating following its CIMSPA inspection. This achievement reflects the standards, expertise and commitment embedded throughout our training offer.

In response to the increasing risks and challenges facing young people, we have also trained professionals in serious youth violence, helping them understand risk factors, identify signs of vulnerability and engage young people safely and effectively. This has been complemented by accessible first-aid training and bleed-kit training developed for professionals working directly with young people.



Developing Young Leaders

Our commitment to workforce development begins with young people themselves. During the year, we trained over 500 young people through our Youth Leadership and Peer Consultation programmes.

Youth Leadership training helps participants build confidence, communication, teamwork and organisational skills while preparing them to take greater responsibility within projects and their communities.

Peer Consultation training enables young people to gather the views of others in ways that are inclusive, respectful and meaningful.

Together, these programmes create progression routes from participation into volunteering, leadership and employment, while ensuring young people have the skills and confidence to shape decisions that affect them.



Creating Pathways

We have continued to help young people explore education, employment, training and volunteering through careers fairs, the National Careers Challenge and practical opportunities within Sporting Communities to help them learn more about the pathways available across education, employment, training and volunteering.

We have also hosted college and university students from across the UK for work experience and placements, connecting academic learning with frontline practice, while contributing their own knowledge and ideas to our organisation.

Our partnership with the University of Derby has continued, with Sporting Communities again forming the focus of a university module. Through this work, we supported students to understand what youth work looks like in practice, exploring the importance of trusted relationships, community presence, reflective practice and responding flexibly to the needs of young people.

600+

Young people and professionals
accessing training



Investing in Our Team

Investing in our own workforce is essential to maintaining high-quality, inclusive services. Throughout the year, staff accessed a range of professional development opportunities, including specialist training on engaging people with sensory impairments, delivered by GB Paralympic medal-winning coach Geraint Richards. This learning has strengthened our team's ability to adapt activities to meet a wider range of needs.

“ **BECAUSE INCLUSION IS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO, OUR SESSIONS ARE OPEN TO EVERYONE. THIS TRAINING HELPED ME UNDERSTAND HOW SMALL CHANGES CAN MAKE OUR SESSIONS MORE ACCESSIBLE AND ENJOYABLE FOR EVERYONE.** ”



Supporting Our Team Beyond the Workplace

We want our team to enjoy positive wellbeing, feel supported and have opportunities to grow beyond their day-to-day roles. We encourage staff to take part in initiatives that challenge them, support causes they care about and create a positive impact for others.

This year, our Community Development Officer, Ali, completed an incredible charity bike ride from Munich to Vienna, cycling approximately 450 miles over five days. His efforts raised funds for projects supporting people in Syria, Gaza, Lebanon and Yemen, as well as Leicester Children's Hospitals. We are incredibly proud of his determination, generosity and commitment to helping others.



Assets



This year, we expanded our portfolio of community facilities by taking on the management of Moss Farm AGP, alongside our existing assets at Normanton Park. This has increased our capacity to reach more people through sport and community activity, while enabling us to offer a broader range of opportunities including hockey, netball and tag rugby.

Our Nexus team manages the day-to-day operation of these facilities, helping ensure they are safe, welcoming and well used. Across our assets, we recorded a 166% increase in engagement, demonstrating the growing importance of these spaces to the communities they serve.

Our operating model is designed to balance sustainability with inclusive access. By working closely with clubs, community organisations, schools and local partners, we are able to provide high-quality facilities to people who may otherwise face financial, cultural or practical barriers to participation. This allows children, young people, families and community groups to benefit from safe and professionally managed spaces, regardless of their circumstances.

“ **EVERYONE IS WELCOME
HERE. I FEEL SAFE,
INCLUDED AND I CAN JUST
BE MYSELF. I JUST LOVE IT
HERE!** ”



Community Assets in Action

Managing community assets also strengthens the wider support we can offer. These facilities provide trusted locations where we can deliver youth work, community sport, consultation, training, wellbeing activities and social action. They allow us to build longer-term relationships with participants, respond more flexibly to local needs and connect people with further opportunities and support.

We have continued to develop stable, long-term relationships with regular users to help ensure our facilities remain active, sustainable and rooted within their communities. These include Walk in the Park Nursery at Normanton Park Community Centre and Winnington Park Hockey Club at Moss Farm.

By combining strong facility management, inclusive access and trusted local partnerships, we are creating community assets that offer much more than a place to play sport. They are spaces where people can feel safe, build relationships, access support and take an active role in community life.



Exploring New Possibilities for Play

This year, researchers from Oxford Brookes University visited our facilities to explore how community sports spaces could provide more opportunities for informal and creative play. Their research focused particularly on the areas between and around formal sports facilities, which are often overlooked despite their potential to encourage movement, imagination and social interaction.

Young people played a central role in the research, sharing how they currently use the spaces and how they would like them to develop. This led to young people co-designing a virtual reality play environment around our sports courts in Derby, demonstrating how digital ideas and lived experience can help reimagine physical community spaces.

The project has helped us think differently about the design and use of our assets. Rather than viewing courts and facilities only as places for organised sport, we are exploring how the whole environment can support play, connection, creativity and a greater sense of ownership among young people.





**“ THE SESSIONS GAVE ME SOMETHING TO
LOOK FORWARD TO AFTER SCHOOL. IT’S
A SAFE PLACE WHERE I CAN PLAY, HAVE
FUN AND LEARN NEW THINGS. ”**

Consultancy and Strategic Development

Our experience of engaging young people and communities has increasingly been commissioned by other organisations seeking to strengthen their services, facilities and long-term plans. We combine youth and community consultation with practical delivery knowledge, helping partners move from listening and insight to clear, realistic and evidence-informed action.

Our consultancy approach is rooted in meaningful participation. Through surveys, focus groups, interviews and stakeholder engagement, we gather a broad range of perspectives and translate them into strategies that reflect local needs, available resources and opportunities for sustainable development.

Middleport Youth Plan

Middleport Matters commissioned us to develop The Middleport Youth Plan: A Civic Infrastructure Strategy for Youth, Place and Shared Power.

Consultation with young people, residents, staff and local stakeholders helped identify the opportunities, concerns and priorities affecting the area.

The resulting three-year plan provides a neighbourhood strategy for strengthening youth participation, community resilience and shared civic responsibility across Middleport. It localises the priorities of the national youth strategy, translating ambitions around participation, prevention and place-based youth provision into a practical and deliverable local model.

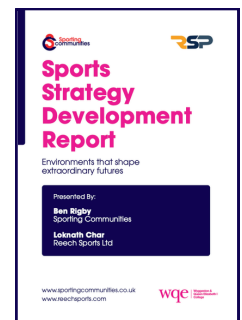


WQE Facilities Strategy

Working with Reech Sports Ltd, we developed a sport and facilities plan for WQE Sixth Form College in Leicester.

Consultation with students, staff and wider stakeholders identified participation levels, barriers to activity and the needs of both the college and surrounding community.

The resulting Sports Strategy Development Report set out a practical approach to using sport and physical activity to improve student engagement, wellbeing and future opportunities. It also included recommendations for programme development, facility improvements, community use and indicative costs to support future investment and funding.



Through our consultancy work, we help organisations place young people and communities at the centre of planning while ensuring the resulting strategies are ambitious, realistic and capable of being delivered.



“ **THEY TOOK TIME TO UNDERSTAND BOTH THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND THE PRACTICAL REALITIES...WE APPRECIATED THEIR OPENNESS TO FEEDBACK AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO PRODUCING A STRATEGY THAT FELT PRACTICAL, REALISTIC AND USEFUL FOR OUR FUTURE PLANNING.** ”

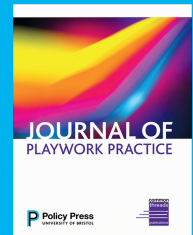
Academic Research

At Sporting Communities, we believe that theory and practice should complement and continually inform one another. Frontline delivery gives us valuable insight into the experiences of young people and communities, while research helps us examine those experiences, challenge our assumptions and strengthen the way services are designed and delivered.

This year, we worked with Oxford Brookes University to explore how spaces around formal sports facilities could encourage informal and creative play. Academic expertise, practitioner knowledge and young people's lived experience combined to explore how the spaces between formal sports areas could be used to encourage informal and creative play. In addition, we have also featured in several academic publications.

A Play-Based Stoic Intervention: Preventive Pedagogy for Childhood Resilience

proposes a preventative, strengths-based approach that combines play with accessible principles from Stoic philosophy. It considers how children can use play to develop emotional regulation, resilience and the ability to respond positively to everyday challenges, rather than relying only on support once difficulties have escalated.



A Journey into Hybrid Play Space Approaches Within an Urban Context

examines the development of the free, open-access play environment at Normanton Park. It explores how playwork and forest-school principles can be combined, the role adults play in supporting child-led activity and the value of hybrid approaches in communities experiencing deprivation. The paper argues that inclusive and accessible play environments can strengthen creativity, resilience and children's connection with nature.

Playing on the Ruins: Children, War, and the Reclamation of Space. This paper introduces the concept of reclamatory play and explores how children use play to interpret, transform and reinhabit spaces, objects and narratives shaped by conflict. It considers what this reveals about children's resilience, meaning-making and relationship with the environments they inherit.



Influencing Place-Based Practice

Stewardship of Place: A Policy Framework for Long-Term Place-Based Investment, Community Governance and Youth Opportunity draws on our experience of sustained delivery within communities. It considers how long-term investment, local stewardship, shared governance and meaningful opportunities for young people can support more effective and sustainable place-based change.

The framework is currently being assessed by Liverpool John Moores University, helping us test and strengthen its ideas through academic review.



Environmental Impact

We remain committed to reducing our environmental impact and helping communities care for the places they use. Throughout the year, our teams have continued to keep sessional areas clean, combining regular maintenance with practical environmental activity involving young people, families and local partners.

Across our facilities, we have collected and recycled more than 280 litres of waste each week, helping reduce litter and encourage more responsible use of shared spaces. We also delivered community clean-up initiatives and litter picks across Derby, including around Normanton Park, creating cleaner, safer and more welcoming environments while giving residents opportunities to take pride in their community.

Looking ahead, we have secured funding to develop new green initiatives in Derby, creating further opportunities for residents to improve local spaces and learn about sustainability. In Staffordshire Moorlands, we have also supported young people to design and deliver environmental social action projects, enabling them to take practical action on issues that matter to them.

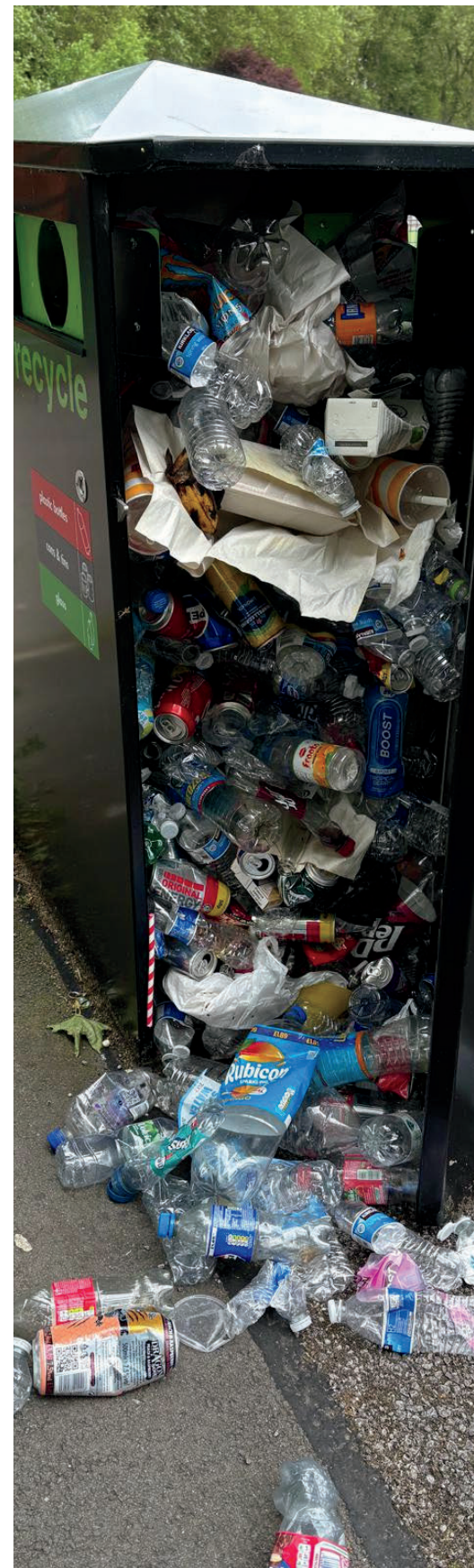
Through these activities, we are helping create cleaner and greener communities while encouraging long-term responsibility for the environment.

14,560

litres of
recyclable waste
collected



HELPING WITH THE LITTER PICK MADE ME FEEL PROUD OF WHERE I LIVE AND CLOSER TO EVERYONE WHO JOINED IN. WHEN THE AREA IS CLEANER, PEOPLE SEEM HAPPIER AND IT FEELS MORE LIKE A COMMUNITY WE ALL CARE ABOUT.



Impact Measurement

This year, we have strengthened the way we capture, understand and communicate our impact. Historically, we have used our monitoring and evaluation software to record participation, demographics, attendance and project outcomes, alongside working with young people to co-design services around their needs.

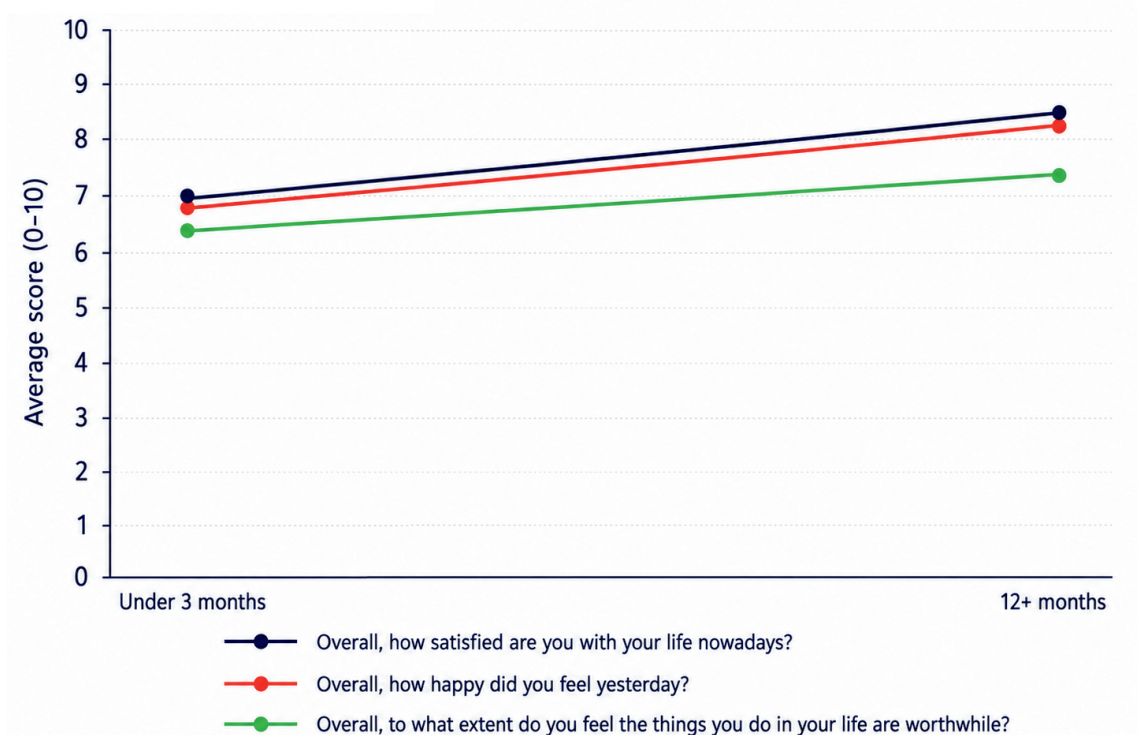
We are now building on this foundation by using WELLBY measures to better understand changes in wellbeing and the wider social value created through our work. This helps us move beyond simply counting activities and attendances to exploring the difference participation makes to people's lives.



**OUR ENHANCED
APPROACH MEANS WE
CAN DEMONSTRATE NOT
ONLY HOW MANY PEOPLE
WE REACH, BUT HOW
LIVES, OPPORTUNITIES AND
COMMUNITIES ARE
CHANGING AS A RESULT.**



WELLBY Findings by Length of Engagement



We have also tracked our Net Promoter Score, increased the number of case studies and personal stories we capture, giving participants the opportunity to describe change in their own words. Alongside individual experiences, we are recording young people's collective views on important and emerging issues. This helps us understand how young people are feeling, identify changing concerns and adapt our services more quickly and effectively.

By bringing together participation data, wellbeing measures, case studies, co-design and collective youth voice, we are developing a much richer picture of our impact. Each method provides a different part of the story; together, they help us evidence what is working, recognise where we can improve and ensure that our decisions remain grounded in the experiences of the people we support.

Case Studies

When Ryan first began attending Sporting Communities sessions, he arrived feeling noticeably nervous and unsure of himself. He often stayed on the edges of activities, watching rather than participating, and needed reassurance before feeling comfortable enough to engage. Staff recognised his hesitation early on and took time to build trust, offering gentle encouragement and opportunities to join activities at a pace that felt safe for him.

Through this patient and supportive approach, Ryan slowly began taking small steps forward. With staff encouragement, he moved from brief moments of participation to becoming an active member of team games such as dodgeball and basketball. He now contributes positively and shows resilience when trying new or more physically demanding activities. Staff also supported Ryan to explore creative sessions, where drawing and crafts became an important outlet for self-expression. He has shown strong focus and pride in producing thoughtful, detailed artwork, further strengthening his confidence.



Ryan's interactions with siblings and peers have also developed positively. With guidance and positive role modelling from staff, he communicates respectfully, shares resources, and works cooperatively within the group. Over several months, Ryan has grown from a nervous young person unsure about taking part into a confident and engaged participant, demonstrating the powerful impact of consistent support, patience, and positive relationships with staff.

Since attending Sporting Communities sessions Maxine (Max) has become a regular and valued member of the group. From her first interaction, she presented herself as a polite, respectful and highly active young person who quickly engaged with activities.

Max demonstrates strong football ability, which has positively influenced group dynamics, particularly among the boys. Staff recognised early on that her confidence and skill gave her the potential to support others and worked with her to channel this positively. Through encouragement and guidance, Max was introduced to informal volunteering opportunities within sessions, supporting staff, encouraging participation, and helping younger participants feel included. These opportunities have enabled Max to develop important leadership skills.

During activities, she now takes on informal leadership roles, encouraging teammates, promoting teamwork, and modelling good sportsmanship. Staff have supported her growth in confidence and maturity by helping her understand the responsibility of being a positive influence.

As a result of her progress and commitment, Max has signed up to complete a Youth Leadership course with Sporting Communities' Sustaining Communities Training Academy, marking an important next step in his development. Max's presence has a motivating effect on the group, helping create a welcoming environment. Overall, she is developing into a positive role model and emerging young leader for younger participants.



Partners

Strong partnerships are essential to delivering services that respond effectively to the needs of young people and communities. Throughout the year, we have continued to strengthen relationships with existing partners while building new connections with organisations that share our values and commitment to positive change.

By working collaboratively, we are able to combine local knowledge, specialist expertise and different perspectives to design stronger, more responsive services. Where additional knowledge or capacity is needed, we work with trusted partners who can complement our strengths and help ensure communities receive the highest-quality support possible. We have also remained active within local, regional and national networks. These relationships help us learn from others, keep pace with emerging practice and contribute our own frontline insight.

This year, we have also developed new consortium arrangements that bring together organisations around shared local priorities. We are excited to see how these partnerships grow, how learning is shared and how the combined strengths of each organisation can create lasting impact for communities.

Our partnerships are built on more than individual projects. We aim to develop trusted, long-term relationships that encourage honest discussion, shared learning and coordinated action. By bringing together community organisations, public services, education providers, businesses and national agencies, we can achieve more than any organisation working alone.

Thank You to Our Funders and Supporters

We are incredibly grateful to every organisation that has funded, commissioned or invested in our work during the year. Their support has enabled us to create safe spaces, deliver inclusive activities, support young people at risk, develop community assets and help residents turn their ideas into action.

We would also like to thank every organisation, club, group and individual who has purchased a service from Sporting Communities, booked training or hired one of our venues and facilities. This earned income plays an important role in sustaining our work and allows us to reinvest in opportunities for young people and communities.

Behind every grant, contract, booking and purchase are real opportunities for people to connect, learn, feel safe and fulfil their potential. We deeply value the confidence placed in Sporting Communities and sincerely thank everyone whose support helps make our work possible.



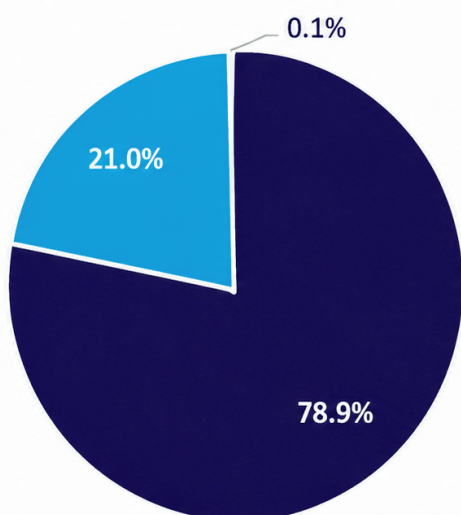
Income and Funding

During the year, Sporting Communities continued to strengthen and diversify its income, helping us remain resilient while continuing to invest in high-quality support for young people and communities.

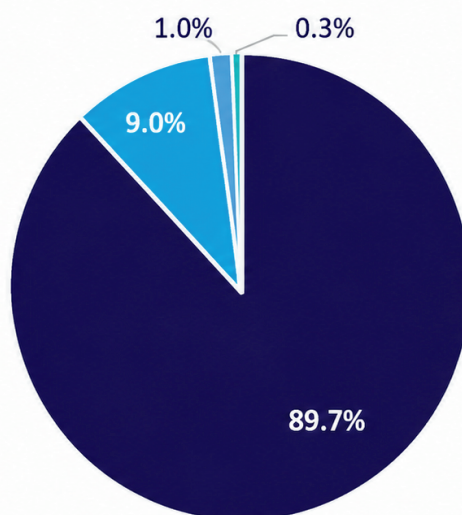
Our income came from a combination of grants, sales and a small amount of miscellaneous income. Grant funding remained the largest source of income, enabling us to deliver vital projects and respond to community need. At the same time, income generated through sales, services and facility use continued to play an important role in supporting our sustainability and reducing reliance on a single source of funding.

Alongside growing our income, we have continued to review expenditure carefully, seeking better value and reducing unnecessary costs without compromising the quality of our services. These efficiencies allow us to reinvest in our workforce, facilities and the support we provide to young people and communities.

2025/26 Income breakdown



2024/25 Income breakdown



■ Grants (78.9%) ■ Sales (21.0%) ■ Misc income (0.1%) ■ Grants (89.7%) ■ Sales (9.0%) ■ Donations (1.0%) ■ Miscellaneous (0.3%)

One of our key ambitions for the year was to diversify our income streams, place greater emphasis on earned income and develop more sustainable practices that reduce our reliance on grant funding. We have begun making that transition. While grants remain essential to delivering many of our programmes, income generated through sales, training, consultancy, commissioned services and facility hire now represents 21% of our total income, compared with 9% in the previous year.

This balanced approach gives us greater flexibility, strengthens our long-term resilience and enables us to reinvest earned income into high-quality opportunities for young people and communities building a stronger long-term future for the organisation.

Future Outlook

Looking ahead, Sporting Communities will continue to invest in sustainable growth while protecting the quality, values and community focus that underpin our work. Our priorities will centre on creating stronger pathways for young people, improving how we operate and demonstrating what can be achieved through genuine collaboration.

Over the coming year, we plan to:

- **Develop our Alternative Provision offer**, creating supportive pathways for young people who are struggling within traditional education and helping them rebuild confidence, skills and engagement with learning.
- **Streamline our operations through improved software and supportive AI**, reducing administrative pressure, strengthening monitoring and enabling staff to spend more time working directly with young people and communities. Technology will support, rather than replace, professional judgement and trusted relationships.
- **Enhance our impact measurement**, using WELLBY to better evidence changes in wellbeing and social value, alongside live stories and first-hand experiences from the people engaging with our services. This will help us understand not only how many people we reach, but the difference our work makes to their lives.
- **Further develop our community assets**, increasing access, improving facilities and expanding the range of sport, youth work, training and community services delivered from them.
- **Grow our consultancy work**, using our expertise in youth engagement, community consultation, place-based development and facility planning to help other organisations turn insight into practical action.
- **Demonstrate collaborative working at scale** through our consortiums, showing how organisations with shared values and complementary expertise can coordinate resources, learning and delivery to achieve greater long-term impact.
- **Continue diversifying our income**, strengthening earned-income opportunities while securing investment that enables us to respond to emerging community needs.

Across each priority, we will remain committed to listening, learning and developing services alongside the people they are intended to support. Our ambition is not simply to grow, but to become more effective, sustainable and capable of evidencing and creating lasting change with young people, communities and partners.



Reflection from our Strategic Director



Ross Podyma

STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

This year has been an important period of reflection and development for Sporting Communities. As our work has expanded across community

services, training and community assets, we have taken the opportunity to look closely at how these different areas connect and how they can work together to create greater and more sustainable impact.

A major focus has been strengthening the foundations behind our delivery. We have redeveloped our Theory of Change, improved how we gather and use evidence, invested in our workforce and continued to build partnerships that combine different skills, resources and perspectives. This work may not always be as visible as the activities taking place in communities, but it is essential to ensuring that our services remain effective, responsible and focused on the outcomes that matter most.

I have been particularly encouraged by our willingness to question established ways of working and explore new approaches. Across the organisation, colleagues have shared ideas, responded constructively to feedback and used learning from frontline delivery to shape future plans. This culture of continuous improvement allows us to adapt without losing sight of our values or the purpose behind our work.

The strength of Sporting Communities lies not only in the projects we deliver, but in the relationships that make them possible. I would therefore like to thank our staff, volunteers and Board for their continued commitment, and our partners, funders and commissioners for the confidence they have placed in us. I would also like to thank everyone who has shared their experiences and ideas with our team, helping us better understand where change is needed and how we can contribute.

Looking ahead, our priority is to build on what we have learned and turn strong ideas into lasting opportunities. By combining trusted community relationships with evidence, skilled people and effective partnerships, I believe Sporting Communities is well placed to extend its impact while continuing to deliver work of which we can all be proud



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