

**OPEN  
DOORS**

**Pilot evaluation report  
February 2020**



# Open Doors introduction

Open Doors focuses on engaging young people during a time when they often have no access to positive facilities and safe spaces, unlocking schools facilities for use. Open Doors provides coaching and mentoring to young people during the school holiday period, to ensure they have access to local delivery and engagement opportunities.

Since 2010 it has been reported that almost all local authorities have made cuts to their youth services<sup>1</sup>. This decline in youth services and facilities is supported by research that suggests 74% of Britons disagree that there are enough youth facilities for children and young people<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, 77% of Britons feel there are not enough places for children and young people to be physically active during the summer holidays<sup>2</sup>. The school holidays are often seen as a time when vulnerable children and young people are hit the hardest. This is reflected in research that shows a decline in fitness over the summer holiday period<sup>3</sup>, the Government's commitment to provide free meals and activities to children over the summer holidays<sup>4</sup>, and ukactive's 'Schools as Community Hubs' delivery model that looks to unlock school facilities for children and young people over the holidays, introducing local activity providers to host subsidised clubs offering activities in a fun, social and safe environment<sup>2</sup>.

Early intervention works to reduce the risk factors and increase the protective factors in a child's life<sup>5</sup>. Effective early intervention works to prevent problems occurring, or to tackle them head-on when they do, before problems get worse<sup>5</sup>. Evidence shows that effective interventions can improve children's life chances at any point during childhood and adolescence<sup>5</sup>.

Open Doors aims to provide positive environments and role models to facilitate these interventions for the most vulnerable children and young people in society. Open Doors focuses on creating positive and safe environments that support the most at risk young people in London, working with Alternate Provision units, Pupil Referral Units and secondary schools in Low Social Economic Areas to engage young people excluded from mainstream education and at risk of youth crime.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/08/23996.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ukactive.com/news/ukactive-calls-for-government-to-stop-disadvantaged-children-being-left-behind-by-summer-holiday-lockout/>

<sup>3</sup>[https://adc.bmj.com/content/early/2019/01/31/archdischild-2018-](https://adc.bmj.com/content/early/2019/01/31/archdischild-2018-315567?utm_source=trendmd&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=allijs&utm_content=americas&utm_term=1-B)

[315567?utm\\_source=trendmd&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=allijs&utm\\_content=americas&utm\\_term=1-B](https://adc.bmj.com/content/early/2019/01/31/archdischild-2018-315567?utm_source=trendmd&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=allijs&utm_content=americas&utm_term=1-B)

<sup>4</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-meals-and-activities-for-50000-children-over-2019-summer-holidays>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/realising-the-potential-of-early-intervention.pdf>

# Delivery development

Open Doors was initially piloted in the summer holidays of 2019. The programme ran two days a week, four hours a day throughout four weeks of August 2019. The programme was delivered by RugbyWorks and involved long term skill development based on rugby for young people from Alternative Provision educational settings. The ethos of the programme was underpinned by the Open Doors pledge, which encouraged participants to be optimistic, proud, non-judgemental and engaged.

To support recruitment and engagement of children and young people into the February 2020 pilot a series of interactive engagement and signposting events were delivered at selected schools. This was added from learnings after the initial summer pilot due to the difficulties of short notice recruitment and want to engage the young people much earlier in the process.

The young person's journey focuses on the following areas:

- » **Engagement** — minimising the impact of their past
- » **Integration** — making better decisions in the present
- » **Achievement** — planning to ensure a long term successful future

“Thank you, all the boys enjoyed it. Be good to do it again as gives them something to do.”  
- Teacher at local school



**OPEN DOORS**

“It's good to have those people that was working with prime ministers, John McAvoy and the big boss”

“Just shows you like you don't need to be big headed and all that.”

*So it's good getting people from the position of influence coming down and seeing what's going on?*

“Yeah they didn't need to come down. They could be sitting where they sit just looking down on us. That day that they came down and spent the whole day with us was good. Joined in and everything.”

Dallaglio RugbyWorks **UK active KIDS**

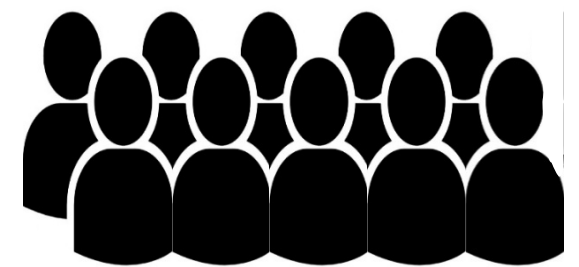
# February 2020 pilot

The February half term pilot of Open Doors was conducted in the London Borough of Sutton, South London.



Participants were from three Croydon Alternate Provisions/ Pupil Referral units and delivery took place in Harris Academy Sutton three local schools within the Borough of Sutton.

A total of 10 participants were engaged in the pilot. They were all male between the ages of 13-17 years. Six participants were White British, three were Black British and one was mixed ethnicity.



Delivery was through core enablers Dallaglio RugbyWorks and consisted of sports and games participation, group coaching and mentoring, offsite group bonding trips, progress logs, and daily healthy breakfast and lunches.

Delivery was at Harris Academy Sutton across three weekdays of the February school half term holiday. The day began at 10.00 and ended at 15.00. Taxis were used to ensure the participants could get to and from the pilot.



Timings	Example Day
10:00 - 10:30	Breakfast/Mentoring - Chat with participants about how they are feeling/what they have been up to
10:30 - 11:30	Inclusive sports participation
11:30 - 11:45	Break - team talk/communication workshop
11:45 - 12:30	Self development and team building exercises
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch
13:30 - 15:00	External provider – Go Karting
15:00	Travel Home



# Evaluation approach

To measure and understand the potential impact of the Open Doors pilot on those taking part the ukactive Research Institute conducted a qualitative evaluation. This included running focus groups with the participants during one of the delivery days. Additional case studies were collated from individuals associated with the children, as well as feedback from the RugbyWorks coaches. Any names used in case studies or quotes are pseudonyms to protect identity.

The focus groups were conducted to explore the participants thoughts and feeling towards their participation. This focused on social interactions, mental wellbeing, physical activity, and the Open Doors pilot. The focus groups were transcribed and analysed using content analysis. Key themes and findings are reported with next steps and recommendations provided.



"Jerone had a great time. It's so good for us to send him somewhere where we don't have to worry."  
- Teacher at local school

"He always speaks really positive about his days and the activities and is keen to go."  
- Teacher at local school

"Max was particularly interested in the man who spoke about turning his life around from prison to rowing. He has since looked up lots of stats around teenagers being chucked out of school and offending/re-offending etc. it is good he's taking an interest in this area."  
- Teacher at local school

# Focus group results

Content analysis was used to pull out key themes and sub-themes from the focus groups. These are represented in the bubble diagrams below with more description around each of them.

## Positive Role models

Coaches facilitated social interactions and encouraged young people to feel more confidence talking to new people

The care given by the coaches made the young people who attended feel supported.

The 'inspirational figures' who attended, like John McAvoy made the young people who attended feel appreciated and 'remembered'.

The coaches experiences encouraged the young people to view people from different perspectives. For example young people felt inspired through the work that the coaches were doing through the project.

## Changes to daily routines

Waking up early meant young people who wouldn't normally have eaten had breakfast.

Young people felt more energised and positive from the routine and structure from the project.

The project gave young people an opportunity to do something active and productive with their time, which they would otherwise be spending in bed or inside playing video games.

## Social Interaction and confidence

Young people who attended claimed that as they spent more time with different people they became more open to the idea of meeting further new and different people from themselves and their friends.

Spending time with others gave young people more confidence in themselves and to engage in new social interactions.

Young people who attended interacted with others who they said they normally would not spend time with.

The social interaction and informal chats with coaches allowed some young people to discuss issues that were bothering them.

# Case Studies & RugbyWorks Feedback

## Case Study – Participants advocating the project

Danny was new to the Be More! Open Doors Project this half-term but was the first to register his interest. As an avid rugby fan and player, he was keen to take part and once he joined the project he spoke to his friends and recruited three more across the three days. From the start he was a strong advocate for the sessions and a great encouragement to others.

At first Danny was a reserved when first meeting the coaches and then the other participants in the project, however he dropped his guard once he understood the reason behind the project and had the chance to take part in the games and activities – particularly boxing that he has a passion for. He had extremely high energy and used this to engage others in his team and increase their energy too. As the oldest and biggest of the young people who attended, coaches were unsure if Danny would use this to act as the ‘alpha of the pack’, however they were soon proved wrong. He used this to encourage others outside of his team rather than intimidate them and contributed to building a safe, comfortable and positive environment for some of the younger participants. For example, during touch rugby, when confronted by another participant about the rules, he did not argue back but clearly explained the reason for his action (having more experience with rugby) which prevented the situation from exculpatating in a way that it may have in a school environment.

Danny is a wonderful example of how young people are able to show a different side of themselves when taken out of their familiar or every day environments. He also provided value feedback in the focus groups to help support and improve the project going forward.

## RugbyWorks Feedback

This improved with time. We had a lot of registered interest (another 6 atop of who attended) but as the majority of them were quite new to the schools they didn't attend because they were still settling in.

We used a mixture of coaches and personality styles.

We used a combination of our own games and visits from external providers.

How did recruiting participants go?

How did you keep participants engaged?

We ensured there was down-time between games to encourage informal chats and break the ice between new groups.

We identified champions – participants who had engaged well with our RugbyWorks sessions – and the supported us by recruiting a number of their friends to attend. This approach using word of mouth worked really well and would be good to use again in the future.

We had 3 young people who attended the summer project come back, which we feel helped the others engagement.

# Case Studies & RugbyWorks Feedback

## RugbyWorks Feedback

This time round the young people interacted a lot better and there were no issues – by the final day they happily mixed teams and shared their PlayStation handles.

Having coaches visit providers themselves to encourage support through face to face discussion.

A greater range of external providers to improve interest from sports clubs.

What did you feel went particularly well?

Look at the potential to run it for a whole week, to better support children and parents.

What to do you feel you could develop or change if the project ran again?

The venue was easily accessible and had impressive facilities, which helped excite the group.

Having inspirational figures like John McAvoy speak was great motivation for the group and sparked a lot of interest for them afterwards.

While there is a drive for more participants, this might be to the detriment of the young people we are targeting. I think a realistic target would be have no more than 15. In their Pupil Referral Units they will be limited to 6 a class, so numbers above that and they are already out of their comfort zone.

## Case Study – the project supporting behaviour change

Jerone started his journey with the Open Doors project as a turbulent one, as he got involved in arguments with other participants when he first arrived. At first it was quite hard to predict how he would react, as he reacted sporadically, however getting involved in the games gave him a chance to release energy and helped stabilise his mood. He also became more engaged once he got to know some of the coaches and had the opportunity to speak through what was troubling him.

Over the three days the coaches noticed a considerable improvement in Jerone's attitude. He became less reactive and argumentative with others, even if a game became boisterous and appears more disciplined. Before he attended Open Doors he had been attacked and threatened in his local area, and his family were hopeful that Open Doors would help him build back up his confidence. They reported that they felt this was the case, and Jerone's behaviour change was evident not only in the club but also at home.

There are still opportunities for Jerone to be supported around meeting, interacting and trusting new people potential through continued involvement in projects like this one. Encouragingly, he has expressed interest in being involved in the Open Doors project again, and even made plans to take up his previous hobby of boxing by booking in for his first fight at the end of March.



# What next?

In addition to the themes from the focus groups, young people provided some valuable feedback about how they felt the project could be improved. This has been combined with the feedback from the RugbyWorks coaches and the data from the focus groups to support the project if it were to expand or develop.

- » Trial in more than one location and outside of London to increase the spread of the project.
- » Given the success of the pilot to improve confidence and social interaction keep the focus on bringing different people together and building social trust.
- » Continue to have inspirational figures alongside funders and local government engage with the project to provide support and encouragement to the young people attending.
- » Given that the project encouraged positive breakfast routines, continue to provide food that is balanced and healthy that can promote eating well.
- » Given the important roles coaches played on the young people attending, continue to work with relatable and well trained coaches who are able to support young people with personal issues. For example this might include extending training to include mental health awareness training.
- » Young people felt most comfortable working in smaller groups where they had close attention from the coaches. Even if the project size expands, ensure the number of participants remains manageable for coaches so they can connect with the young people and young people can work in small teams, preventing them from being disengaged.
- » Given young peoples interest in trying new activities, look to expand the current activity offer to include ones that are less traditional in a school setting.

The project was successful in bringing together young people from different backgrounds and building their confidence to interact with new and different people. Open Doors is a unique project that has great potential to support these young people to build positive life skills by allowing them to engage in enjoyable activities and be guided by caring and influential role models in a safe environment.



“You didn’t have to do this but then you did, so you know you helped us with a lot of things. So we are going to remember this for our whole lives so thank you for these opportunities.”

For more information on Open Doors please contact the ukactive Children, Young people, and Families team - [kids@ukactive.org.uk](mailto:kids@ukactive.org.uk)

For more information on the evaluation or the ukactive Research Institute please contact the ukactive Research Institute - [research@ukactive.org.uk](mailto:research@ukactive.org.uk)