



**time to change**

let's end mental health discrimination

# IMAGINE YOUR GOALS

**IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH FOOTBALL**



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## INTRODUCTION

**IMAGINE** Your Goals was a two year project to improve wellbeing through sport. Running from 2010-2012, it aimed to help people's physical and mental health; increase the social inclusion of people with mental health problems; and tackle the stigma and discrimination people with mental health problems experience. Sixteen Imagine Your Goals projects were delivered by community trusts and schemes affiliated to Premier League football clubs, and the Premier League and Sport Relief jointly funded the programme.

Time to Change, the anti-stigma and discrimination programme, managed Imagine Your Goals. Time to Change is England's biggest programme to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems, and is run by the charities Mind and Rethink Mental Illness. From 2007-2011 Time to Change was

funded by £16m from the Big Lottery Fund and £4.5m from Comic Relief, and from October 2011 it has been funded by the Department of Health and Comic Relief.

The Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London provided evaluation of Imagine Your Goals, which focused on the impact of the physical activity and social contact. The evaluation looked at whether attending sessions improved the wellbeing of participants; if it increased their engagement with their local community and if it decreased stigma and discrimination. In addition to this, participants and staff completed evaluation forms (196 received in total), participants took part in five focus groups and projects submitted monitoring reports. This completed the picture of how projects were making a difference to participants and the overall success of Imagine Your Goals.

## ABOUT IMAGINE YOUR GOALS

"Premier League clubs have shown in recent years the diverse range of issues that they can now tackle through the work they do in their communities. I am extremely pleased that this is being extended with our support for the Imagine Your Goals programme that aims to use the power of football to help tackle the stigma surrounding mental health problems."

Simon Morgan, Head of Community Development at the Premier League

**I**n 2007 Everton in the Community began a new project they called Imagine Your Goals. Funded by Mersey Care NHS Trust, they designed the project to encourage people with mental health problems to take part in football sessions, with access to advice and support if they wanted. The local profile of the club attracted attention and this, coupled with the attraction of football, made sure the project had a high number of regular attendees. Project staff saw an improvement in the physical fitness of participants; a distinct increase in confidence and self-esteem; and a reduction in reliance on medication. They also noticed that people attending their sessions with enthusiasm and excitement did not attend other types of mental health interventions nearly as readily.

The Premier League funded the project from 2008, and in 2010, in partnership with Sport Relief, it was decided to develop a programme to roll Imagine Your Goals out further. The projects awarded funding were:

- **Arsenal in the Community** - How are you feeling today?
- **Birmingham City FC Community Trust** - Confidence through Football
- **Blackburn Rovers Community Trust** - Boyz 2 Men
- **Bolton Wanderers Community Trust** - Imagine Your Goals
- **The Chelsea Foundation** - Imagine Your Goals
- **Everton in the Community** - Imagine Your Goals
- **Fulham Football Club Foundation** - Imagine Your Goals
- **Tigers Sport & Education Trust (Hull City FC)** - Imagine Your Goals
- **Liverpool FC Foundation** - Half Time Score (2)
- **Manchester City in the Community** - Imagine Your Goals
- **Manchester United Foundation** - Raise Your Mood
- **Pompey in the Community** - Imagine Your Goals
- **Stoke City Community Trust** - Imagine Your Goals
- **Tottenham Hotspur Foundation** - Game of Two Halves
- **Wigan Athletic Community Trust** - Imagine Your Goals
- **Wolves Community Trust** - Head for Health

Between them, projects received £500,000 in funding, delivered services to nearly 3,000 people directly, and reached hundreds of thousands through their campaigning work.

"Comic Relief has found working with the Premier League a fruitful partnership bringing together our interest in using football as a catalyst to improve mental health and help reduce stigma and discrimination. The evaluation has shown the value of this approach to those who took part and helped broaden our understanding of the best ways of undertaking this work. We hope it is equally useful to others working in this field."

Peter Argall, Learning and Development Manager (UK Grants) at Comic Relief

# WHAT WERE THEIR TARGETS?

**ALL** projects ran physical activity sessions designed to improve health, increase confidence and decrease isolation for people with experience of mental health problems. Most projects delivered football sessions, but some only ran them in combination with other activities and a few did not do football at all. Liverpool FC Foundation, Tottenham Hotspur Foundation, Stoke City Community Trust and Wigan Athletic Community Trust were amongst those that ran a mixture of activities. Participants varied widely - some projects only accepted referrals from NHS services; some accepted anyone with experience of mental health problems; whilst others focused on people at risk of experiencing mental health problems in the future. Two of the projects, Blackburn Rovers Community Trust and Tottenham Hotspur Foundation, had a particular focus on young people.

Projects also aimed to create situations where social contact could take place. Social contact in this context is a conversation that specifically involves one person describing their experiences of mental health problems to another person that has not had that experience. Conversations need to take place in a fair and equal environment. These types of conversations are helpful for breaking down barriers, helping people without mental health problems to see people with mental health problems for who they are. This type of social contact is commonly used in anti-stigma and discrimination activity.

Finally, projects promoted Time to Change campaign messages about mental health stigma and discrimination. Projects responded to this challenge innovatively, making good use of their profile and reach. Some campaigned on match days, handing out flyers to fans (for example Chelsea Foundation); several did as Pompey in the Community and profiled Time to Change on their website; and others arranged for their club to sign the Time to Change pledge publicly. Projects often made use of their links to clubs - for example, when Manchester United Foundation arranged for two players to attend a session and talk about their own wellbeing to the local press.

"The physical exercise really benefits me. It can be stressful physically and mentally at times, but that improves my coping mechanisms."

Manchester United Foundation participant



# DID PROJECTS IMPROVE SOCIAL CAPITAL?

**WE** wanted to measure whether attending sessions increased the social capital of participants. Social capital is a measurement of the networks that someone has with their local community. It takes into account the engagement individuals have with other people, particularly people that fulfil specific roles or create further links in a community. People who are accepted by their community and feel comfortable are more likely to have high levels of social capital, so this can help show how much discrimination they are experiencing. Participants were also asked about their own roles in their community and the ways in which they created links or connections. It was hoped that Imagine Your Goals would lead to an increase in social capital.

The evaluation showed that participants had improved social capital by taking part in the projects (though some aspects of social capital were not statistically significant improvements). When they started attending participants scored much lower on social capital than the general population, highlighting the potential need and value for projects like those funded by Imagine your Goals. Interestingly, these participants scored slightly higher for social capital than a control group of people with depression, suggesting that they are slightly more engaged with their community. Although the difference was small and could have been due to chance, it warrants more examination.

The most significant change to the participants' social capital was their improved ability to access help (via their social network) to carry out a skilled task: i.e. fix a car. This was also the lowest scoring aspect of participants' social capital when they started attending projects and in turn, showed the most improvement overall. Their capacity to carry out a skilled task for someone else also saw a small increase, though not large enough to be statistically significant. In summary, taking part in these projects was enabling people to create more networks with their local community.

# WHAT IMPACT DID THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HAVE?

## About the participants

Imagine Your Goals reached at least 2,912 people through sessions, tournaments and workshops. The majority of people attending were men (82%), classified themselves as white British (78%) and a large proportion of participants were unemployed (49%). In general, the people attending sessions had lower levels of engagement with their local community than the wider community. Projects were encouraged to engage with diverse groups of people and achieved this in a variety of ways, including targeted session locations, partnership work or local advertising. Project steering groups commonly involved people with lived experience of mental health problems to help to shape and guide the work.

## What drew participants to projects?

Attendees were asked in focus groups what they had wanted to gain from the projects and why they decided to attend. For many, the main pull was football and the profile of the club, though people also gave other, more emotional reasons: they wanted a regular activity that gave them a reason to get out of the house, meet people, and have a more fulfilled social life. Engagement with the projects was also seen as a way of having more purpose in their lives.

Participants said that before attending sessions they had worried about meeting new people because of their previous levels of social isolation, but they also hoped that sessions would increase their social interaction and help them make new friends. Though they worried social interaction might be difficult, participants valued it enough to risk it going wrong to increase it in their lives. On the other hand, they also stated that they did not expect to experience such high levels of social interaction and for people to be so friendly. Participants wanted and hoped for more social interaction, worried that it might not happen, but these fears proved unfounded.

## Decreased social isolation

When asked about the value of attending sessions, focus group contributors gave positive feedback. Taking part had been a lifeline for some of them after periods of poor mental health, social isolation and experiences of stigma. Their responses covered a range of positive mental and physical wellbeing changes - practical benefits like improved fitness, weight loss and improved football skills, but also less measureable benefits, with one contributor simply saying that the project 'saved my life'. Another participant said that the group gave him 'something I've never had before - banter with a group of lads, which I really look forward to.' Participants also felt that their confidence had increased; they found the atmosphere positive, with a welcome sense of equality between coaches and participants.

The value participants gave to the projects was clear in the sense of distress expressed when discussing the possibility of projects ending. Participants voiced fears that they would lose their weekly structure or they would lose opportunities to socialise and ways to express frustrations in a safe environment. One person explained 'If you take that away the [project]... you'll go back into yourself again, you'll have nothing to come out for, you know, and you'll just be spending more time back in your own world again'. Attendees valued sessions and felt they could be valuable for others, unanimously agreeing they would recommend projects to others.



## Improved health, fitness and general wellbeing

Focus group participants highlighted personal and tangible practical benefits of taking part in physical activities, namely, improved fitness, weight loss and improved football skills. The staff running projects also highlighted improvements in physical and mental wellbeing. As with participants, these included predictable elements like weight loss, but also wider ranging and more subtle impacts.

Examples were given of people who spoke out at football sessions but nowhere else, or people that felt positive enough to attend two weeks in a row where normally they would not even be able to leave their house two weeks in a row. Stories abounded of the projects affecting people in unexpected and exciting ways. Bolton Wanderers Community Trust was particularly proud of the fact that 21 participants (out of a total of 112) completed a qualification during the project. Amongst others, Birmingham City FC Community Trust; Blackburn Rovers Community Trust; and Wigan Athletic Community Trust all highlighted participants that had gone on to volunteer, and in some cases find paid work as a result of their engagement with the projects.

Many projects sat within larger organisations that provided wider support to attendees, including advice on stopping smoking, getting a job or sexual health. Some unexpected benefits were unique to these projects because of their links to Premier League football clubs and their organisational structure. Special mention was made of trips to see professional clubs play, and the opportunities people got to travel to tournaments and matches, in some cases abroad.

The evaluation team used the Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale to compare the wellbeing of participants at the beginning and end of their engagement with projects. Despite extremely positive anecdotal and qualitative feedback from participants and project staff alike, this element of the evaluation did not show a statistically significant change.

This difference could be because of the type of measurement. Participants clearly felt positive impacts on their wellbeing as a result of the sessions, but perhaps these benefits did not last. It may also be that these sessions prevented their wellbeing from deteriorating (through long term social isolation) or that a longer time period (for participation and measurement of wellbeing) is needed to see the effects on wellbeing.

**"Imagine Your Goals gives people structure, stability and life. It makes people feel positive as it gives them something to focus on. People who would otherwise have nothing."**

Pompey in the Community participant

# TACKLING STIGMA THROUGH SOCIAL CONTACT

**SOCIAL** contact is the creation of situations where someone with experience of mental health problems discusses their experiences with someone without experience of mental health problems in a full and open conversation. Both parties need to feel that they can ask questions and encourage or curtail the conversation if they wish. We know that this can break down barriers by creating links between people, leading to a better understanding of mental health problems. These types of conversation help people without experience of mental health problems to see people with experience of mental health problems for who they are.

It took time for projects to fully grasp how to facilitate social contact effectively. Although social contact is simple in concept, it can be difficult to explain and understand, and it was often misinterpreted as social interaction. It was not always clear how much social contact took place, and when asked projects sometimes gave examples that could not be described as social contact. Many of the projects ran tournaments where people with and without mental health problems played each other, but unless there was clear time for conversations about experiences of mental health problems this is not social contact. For some projects all their sessions included people with and without experience of mental health problems, but again, unless they created space specifically for discussion about personal experiences of mental health, this could not be classified as social contact in the way Time to Change and the funders looked for.

At events the evaluation team attended, the numbers of people without mental health problems that met someone with a mental health problem and completed an evaluation form were too small to glean information from, so it was not possible to draw any conclusions about the effectiveness of the projects using social contact to tackle stigma and discrimination. The evaluation did find that projects seemed to help participants feel empowered to challenge stigma and discrimination through other means. As a result of attending 78% of attendees with mental

health problems stated that they felt more confident to challenge stigma and discrimination. Imagine Your Goals projects helped empower participants to challenge discrimination when they come across it, perhaps by making people feel a part of a team community and group.

## Social contact case studies

Liverpool FC Foundation ran a series of social contact events where volunteers with experience of mental health problems started discussions about their experiences of mental health with people that did not have experience of mental health problems. The project purposefully created a space for informal discussions where people without experience of mental health problems could ask questions, hear stories and get more information on mental health. The project used activities like bingo and quizzes to engage people's interest and reached 95 people without experience of mental health problems through these events.

Another project, Arsenal in the Community, went to three Time to Change road shows where session attendees took part in social contact. At each event participants spoke to members of the public about their experience of mental health problems, the impact it had on their lives and how stigma and discrimination affected them, using promotional materials and table football to attract attention and start conversations. The club's profile caught the attention of people that might not normally talk about mental health or attend a mental health event.



**PROJECTS** took to campaigning with enthusiasm, taking advantage of their profile locally, the large numbers they had access to and the enthusiasm of staff and participants alike. Methods of campaigning included putting photos and content in match day programmes, signing the Time to Change pledge publically, and showing the Time to Change adverts on their websites. Some projects created partnerships with players on the first teams, and then used those to draw attention to the impact of mental health stigma and discrimination.

Thousands of people were regularly exposed to messages about the impact of stigma and discrimination, and though it was not possible to evaluate that specific audience, we do know that there is a clear and consistent link between awareness of the Time to Change campaign and improved knowledge, attitudes and behaviour around mental health. Since 2007 there has been a 2.4% improvement in public attitudes at a national level; a 3% increase in the numbers of people reporting no discrimination in their lives; and a significant 11.5% reduction in the average levels of discrimination reported in 2011 compared to 2008. The exposure from the Imagine Your Goals projects through their campaigning was a key part of this and undoubtedly led to a wide range of people seeing campaign messages that might otherwise not.

## Campaigning case study

In April 2011 Wolves Community Trust ran a campaign with a variety of activities to reach people with messages about the impact of mental health stigma and discrimination. They produced pledge boards and encouraged staff, management and players to make a pledge on how they personally would tackle mental health stigma and discrimination. Wolverhampton Wanderers FC then publically signed the Time to Change pledge during the half time break on a match day. Match day programmes included information on stigma and discrimination, with a message of support from the Chief Executive, Jeff Moxley. The Time to Change advert was shown throughout the concourses, so that on that one day alone over 30,000 people saw the Time to Change messages in different ways multiple times.

"I found that the project helped me find what I wanted out of my life and it gave me a platform to start a new journey."

Bolton Wanderers Community Trust participant



# WHAT DID WE LEARN?

## The difference these projects make

- These types of projects can increase the interaction of participants with their community by helping people feel an accepted part of a community.
- Projects created highly valued opportunities for increased social interaction.
- Projects like this can help people feel empowered to challenge stigma and discrimination, although in this instance they did not do this through social contact.
- Projects affiliated to football clubs at this level can reach huge numbers of people with key messages about mental health stigma and discrimination.

## The challenges they face

- It can be difficult for projects focused on sports and mental health to create situations where discussions about mental health take place, particularly those situations where people with and without experience of mental health problems can share their experiences.
- Participants relied on the projects and showed distress about the possibility of them finishing, showing a need for project staff to plan for future funding. If this is not possible, exit strategies for people accessing the service need to be prepared.

"I feel I have really benefited from the sessions in a huge way; it has improved my health and self-esteem. I also had the opportunity to represent Wolves in a football tournament - being such a massive fan it was such an honour and it made me so proud."

Wolves Community Trust participant

## The practicalities

The coaches and their relationships with participants are vital to the success of projects. For this reason, staff needed support from colleagues and their peers for this project, as many of them were inexperienced in mental health. Those involved in Imagine Your Goals valued networking days for additional support and guidance.

### The most effective projects did the following:

- Created open and welcoming atmospheres where issues could be raised and resolved quickly. Sessions allowed time for social interaction and informal discussion.
- Had strong referral pathways in place so projects could focus on project delivery (rather than recruitment of participants) and ensure they attracted the participants who would benefit from the project.
- Used the links they had with Premier League clubs effectively and with purpose.
- Considered the logistics carefully so transport was not a problem, and sessions ran regularly and consistently come rain or shine.
- Encouraged a sense of pride, achievement and progression. This could mean improving football skills, arranging trips to see matches, or supporting people to gain qualifications or work. Having activities that allowed people to build up to them (such as tournaments) was consistently referenced as important.
- Designed social contact activity separate from their physical activity sessions, encouraging participants with and without experience of mental health problems to share their experiences.

The sessions address social isolation because they involve a regular structure of weekly activities, alongside events to build up to, like tournaments. They are most effective if the sessions balance the need to improve football skills but remain inclusive to those less skilled.

Time to Change previously ran activities through the Sports and Mental Health project, a Department of Health funded project that linked with Imagine Your Goals. The Sports and Mental Health project worked with the Football Association, and produced three toolkits. These toolkits give specific advice to clubs on how to set up and run sports and mental health projects. These are available on the following link: [time-to-change.org.uk/resources](http://time-to-change.org.uk/resources)



# WHAT NEXT?

**THE** Imagine Your Goals funding lasted for two years, and the programme has now finished. Nearly all projects are seeking ways to continue activities, some through particularly ingenious means, and many through a combination of means.

Some projects, including Manchester City in the Community, are continuing sessions with volunteers rather than paid staff, as well as other methods. Tigers Sport & Education Trust and Wigan Athletic Community Trust are trialling asking participants to pay a small fee for some of their activities, and Birmingham City FC Community Trust and Blackburn Rovers Community Trust are both looking to establish new partnerships locally. Some projects have managed to get continued funding for the project, and Everton in the Community is in a particularly strong position with funding for the sessions until 2015. Other projects that have found enough funding to continue the Imagine Your Goals sessions in the short term are Arsenal in the Community, Fulham Football Club Foundation, and Stoke City Community Trust.

Many of the projects voiced concerns over future funding as the economic situation is so precarious in the voluntary and community sector. Time to Change runs a grant programme for social contact activity, but cannot provide funding for those projects that want to provide football or sports sessions without that type of social contact. Participants raised real concerns about what they would do if projects finished, showing the need for projects like this to implement ongoing fundraising strategies and exit strategies if they do not receive continued funding. Overall these projects have proved to be valuable and very worthwhile to participants. They demonstrate the need and value for this type of work, which is worth building upon in the future.

"The support from the programme has developed the students' confidence and interaction with one another."

Professional working with young people who accessed Birmingham City FC Community Trust

"You've got to have these places to come and talk your troubles out, haven't you? And realise that most of us are all in the same boat. We're all human; we all have the same problems."

"I couldn't run before. I used to run and I'd get knackered, now I can just run the whole pitch."

"The project has changed my life. I used to be more anxious and I didn't have many friends, but I'm now friends with everyone on the team. I wouldn't be doing anything without football, I wouldn't do exercise and I'd get fat from my medication."

Time to Change is England's biggest programme to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems.

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Sport Relief is an initiative of Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland).