



Annual highlights Report 2024

Introduction from Nigel

As we approach the end of 2024, we wanted to take a look back at some of the work we've been involved in over the last 12 months.

We invited our team to put forward their personal highlights from the year and we could have included many more examples for this end of year report. There's a good chance that a number of people reading this report will have been involved in one or more of the highlights. And that's because collaboration is central to so much of what we do.

As a charity we work closely with partners to help individuals and communities tackle inequalities, overcome barriers and build healthy habits for life.

We are made up of local support, development, sport welfare and business support teams, with a Board of trustees adding leadership and oversight. Everyone plays their part, and to everyone who we have worked alongside this year, thank-you.

These highlights provide just a snapshot of the sort of work we do. None of these would be possible without the day-to-day work of connecting, influencing and supporting that are less glamorous but essential to the sort of things you'll read about in this report.

I hope you join us in reflecting on your own highlights and how you are playing your part in bringing the power of sport and physical activity to people and communities who stand to benefit most.

On behalf of everyone at Yorkshire Sport Foundation, we look forward to working alongside you once again in 2025.

Nigel



Nigel Harrison

Chief Executive Officer

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Opening school facilities for the community

Opening School Facilities (OSF) is a funding programme from the Department for Education, supporting schools to open their existing sport facilities for the benefit of the wider community.

This includes partnering with sporting organisations who can help deliver activities. OSF is aimed at tackling inequalities among pupils and the wider community from four distinct groups: people from lower socioeconomic communities; people from ethnically diverse communities; women and girls; disabled people and those with long-term conditions.

By March 2024, more than £1.17m had been distributed to schools across South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, resulting in over 6,000 sessions for almost 14,000 children and young people, and close to 9,000 people in the wider community.

In September, we celebrated the success of the programme by sharing an impact report that included stories from each of the nine districts, illustrating the huge success of the funding, which has continued into a third year for 2024/25.



[Watch the impact stories from three schools](#)



[Read the full report](#)



Showing care for Sheffield's young carers

In June, we worked alongside School Games Organisers (SGOs), Sheffield Young Carers and the Sheffield City Trust to host an event for young carers in Sheffield.

There are over 7,300 young carers in Sheffield, but the true number is likely higher as many go unidentified. These young people provide essential care to family members with long-term illnesses or disabilities, including administering medications.

Hosted at Ponds Forge Leisure Centre for free thanks to the support of Sheffield City Trust, the event brought together 30 young carers in Sheffield for an after-school session of activities that included basketball, table tennis, football and dance.

The event was the culmination of months worth of collaborative work between all partners involved, after insight showed that while this group of young people had been identified as standing to benefit from such an event, there was limited resource to make it happen.

Using the time and expertise of the SGOs, collectively we provided a positive experience for some of the city's most deserving young people. The SGOs used their local knowledge to bring in partners who were not only excellent deliverers for the event but also organisations and clubs motivated to continue to work with young carers beyond this project.

This was just one of a number of highlights for the School Games team in 2024, and you'll be able to read about them all in January 2025, when we release the School Games impact report.



Playing our part in a groundbreaking partnership

In October, we were proud to accept an international award on behalf of a groundbreaking partnership tackling inequality through sport, and supporting a positive impact on the environment.

The Leeds Equipment and Kit Exchange Partnership (LEKEP), created by Leeds City Council's Active Leeds service, sees recycled or unwanted sports kit distributed to deprived communities in the city.

The work of the partnership was recognised on a global level by winning the 'Purpose-led Partnership' category at the prestigious Sport Positive Awards 2024 in London, seeing off international competition from major projects around the world to win the prize.

The Leeds Equipment and Kit Exchange Partnership (LEKEP) is made up of: Leeds City Council, Yorkshire Sport Foundation, Zero Waste Leeds, Action For Sport, Run for all, Leeds United Foundation, The Recovery Runners, Leeds Dock Run Club, Leeds City College, LS-TEN Skate Park, Pendle Sports, British Cycling and Yorkshire Cricket Foundation.

The partnership responds to the needs of diverse communities in Leeds to provide appropriate sports attire and remove the stigma associated with recycled kit.

The partnership in Leeds was initially inspired by the BBC's 'Kit out the Nation' campaign which ran in 2021, and has developed in the years since with more than 20,000 items of kit recycled or reused by community groups in the city.

As well as encouraging healthy active lifestyles, the project also helps to reduce landfill through a more environmentally-sustainable approach, supporting local organisations in creating their own kit donation schemes, reducing waste, and creating a community-driven circular economy promoting inclusive growth.



Glenn, our Development Manager for Leeds, represented the Partnership to collect the award

Taking action on racism

In November, working alongside partner members of the Yorkshire and Humber Anti-Racism in Sport group, we welcomed more than 120 people to Emerald Headingley.

The conference brought together leading organisations across the county and industry experts from sports and policy to discuss the prevalence of racism in sport as well as the role sport can play in combatting racism in the game and wider society.

Also in attendance at the conference were delegates from local government, education, healthcare, and religious sectors to provide further context and perspective from society more widely.

The 'Time for Action on Racism in Sport' conference featured a number of keynote speakers, presentations and a panel discussion covering many different key areas concerning racism in sport, including Chris Grant OBE, one of the UK's leading facilitators of organisational change.

Claire Graham and Wan Abdullah from the inspirational Holbeck Moor Football Club outlined the extraordinary story of how the club has become the UK's first Women's Club of Sanctuary.

Organisations were encouraged to sign the Yorkshire and Humber Anti-Racism in Sport Group's pledge – the Commitment to tackling Racism and racial inequality in community sport, which has so far been signed by more than 150 organisations in the region.

We also discussed a new initiative to support more people from ethnically diverse communities into leadership roles, which we will launch shortly.



[Watch the video](#)



We also hosted our first Iftar event in 2024, a valuable opportunity to progress our own learning, and that of partner organisations working with communities who are observing Ramadan.

Building stronger sub-regional relationships

This year has been election year in both Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA) which resulted in the reappointments of Tracy Brabin in West Yorkshire and Oliver Coppard in South Yorkshire.

With increasing devolution over the last few years, we have sought to build better relationships to ensure sport and physical activity is playing its role in economic development. It has been important that we can evidence the impact of participation through producing advocacy reports for each sub-region setting out the sport and physical activity data available in relation to the broader social and economic strategies of each MCA.

But we know it's much more than producing evidence and data as we seek to build those meaningful relationships so that sport and physical activity is embedded in wider strategic plans.

We were delighted to see Mayor Tracy Brabin's manifesto ambition of more children and young people accessing cultural and sporting opportunities. Since then, along with our partners, we have been working with the team to develop a broad plan that sets out where the strengths of the Mayor and West Yorkshire Combined Authority can make a real difference.

Our CEO is an advisor to the Culture, Heritage and Sport Committee and also Chairs the £72m Shared Prosperity Fund Partners Group, placing us in a good position to influence policy and investment decisions. Specific work is being carried



out on creating a skills plan for the subregion along with programme funding for business support to local sports clubs. Similarly, in South Yorkshire the Mayor, Oliver Coppard,

recognises the role that sport and physical activity can play in his drive to reduce severe health inequalities across the area. Over the last year we have accelerated the joint work between the four districts who have been working as place based partnerships for a number of years in readiness for a joint plan with the MCA, private sector organisation and other partners.

In August, CEO of Sport England, Tim Hollingsworth met separately with both Mayors to further foster relationships to support the embedding of sport and physical activity in their work.

Tracy Brabin welcomed Tim to Yorkshire Amateurs Football Club in Chapeltown, where discussions were had between leaders within the community and Leeds City Council.

In South Yorkshire, the visit was held at Verdon Recreation Centre in Burngreave before moving to Parkwood Springs to see the developments around the park.



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The essential role of physical activity in health and care - moving from connection to collaboration

In October, around 90 people from across the health and care system in West Yorkshire came together to focus on the role of physical activity in the treatment and prevention of long-term conditions.

The event was designed to build cross-sector connections between NHS, local authority, academic and charity sector colleagues, all of which were invited to share what mattered to them ahead of the event.

This allowed Professor John Buckley to provide his expert analysis based on the insight from the attendees. He spoke about the use of physical activity in clinical pathways – what works and why? – with time spent understanding **the latest insight from the Richmond Group of Charities** on supporting people living with long term conditions to be able to move more.

The afternoon session provided the opportunity to work together on West Yorkshire Cancer Prehabilitation pathways, with all Hospital Trusts across the county delivering, or about to begin, programmes using physical activity to help prepare

people for treatment and surgery.

The event follows national engagements and a link to the government mission of building an NHS fit for the future. An NHS position statement on physical activity is expected soon with integrating physical activity into clinical pathways identified as one of four focus areas for further development.

There is a commitment from each of the local district areas to re-convene and continue discussions about cancer prehabilitation pathways, including additional clinical pathways and universal services locally. Further opportunities and challenges at a West Yorkshire level will be shared via our existing colleagues in the Cancer Alliance, West Yorkshire Association of Acute Trusts and the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board. We hope to be able to influence local and national policy, process and practice.

“

Great opportunity to collaborate with clinical team members with a shared interest in improving the physical activity support we offer to patients. ”

“

I enjoyed meeting all the other specialists who together agree we need to be working more collaborative and equitable in services. Stop trying to reinvent the same wheel and work together instead. ”

Welcoming a new Sport Welfare team

In February, we welcomed Nicola, Measha and Douglas to our team.

The trio are part of a national network of 63 (sixty-three) Sport Welfare Officers, recruited by Active Partnerships like us, and funded by Sport England through an investment of National Lottery money.

They are working with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and partners such as the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit and Ann Craft Trust, helping the development of a new local approach to assisting and supporting club welfare officers, to create safer club environments and improved experiences for young people and adults.

The aim of the network is to increase welfare capacity and expertise at a local and national level, and share best practice to help prevent concerns, making sport safe for everyone.

The Whyte Review questioned the level of responsibility and support given to volunteers at grassroots level. The network, in place until March 2027, will complement a sport's existing NGB safeguarding services and provide additional local capacity to help support safeguarding compliance to become embedded in the culture.

Since coming into post, they have built good working relationships with partners in Local Authority, resulting in increased sport-related content on the Safeguarding Children Partnership websites in Calderdale, Leeds and Kirklees. They have also worked to raise the profile of safeguarding in sport with partner agencies, and contributed to Safeguarding Board subgroups and multiagency events alongside health, social care, police, community and voluntary sectors.



supported to improve
their safeguarding and
welfare practice.

The Best Charity to Work For in the UK!

In November, we were thrilled to be named the Best Charity to Work For in the UK by Best Companies.

Best Companies is a leading employee engagement specialist, delivering powerful data and insights to help positive change within the workplace.

They award accreditation based on the unique BCI score generated by a survey sent to every member of a workplace. Organisations achieve a score between zero and 1,000, receiving either a 'One to Watch' status, or 1 – 3 Star Accreditation.

As well as being named the Best Charity, we were also announced as **winners of the 'Giving Something Back' Special Award** (small company category).

We also received:



A three-star, **'World Class Company to Work For'** status for the second successive year

1st

Best Charity to work for in the UK

9th

The ninth best company to work for in Yorkshire and the Humber

10th

The tenth best small business to work for in the UK



Nigel Harrison, our Chief Executive of YSF, commented:

"This is fantastic recognition for every single member of the team who live out our values on a daily basis.

"The 'Best Companies' accreditation allows us to know what the team think of working here, and it's fantastic that they are so proud to be part of this team, just as I am incredibly proud of them.

"I'd like to thank our Board of Trustees for providing support and challenge to myself, our leadership team and the organisation as a whole to be the best we can be."



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Boxing clever to support people with Parkinson's

A need for dedicated boxing sessions for people with Parkinson's was identified by the Yorkshire and Humber Younger Person's Support Group due to the benefits of boxing for those with the condition. However, specialised training was needed so sessions could be provided effectively.

In partnership with England Boxing, Leeds hosted the first Parkinson's-specific bolt-on coaching course. Funding was provided by us and England Boxing for ten coaches from across South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

A regular Parkinson's boxing session now takes place at Trident CIC in Leeds, chosen for its accessibility and adherence to requirements for people with Parkinson's. The 12-week pilot has seen good participation, and discussions are underway between Yorkshire and Humber Younger Person's Support Group, Trident CIC, and YSF to secure further funding to expand the physical activity offer for people with Parkinson's.



More mums moving in Sheffield

The Moving Mums Initiative was a collaborative project involving Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (STH), the Active Getting Pregnancy Foundation (APF), Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), Yorkshire Sport Foundation (YSF), and the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine (NCSEM).

Targeting communities with significant health inequalities - Burngreave, Parson Cross, and Darnall - the initiative focused on using physical activity as a vehicle to improve maternal and infant health outcomes. This aligned with STH's overarching mission to reduce health disparities and improve outcomes through preventative healthcare measures, as well as APF's goal of removing barriers to physical activity during the childbearing years.

It aimed to lay the foundations for promoting physical activity in Sheffield, initially focusing on healthy women with uncomplicated pregnancies. The project included three core delivery elements: scoping, upskilling, and embedding of resources. These components were designed to enhance understanding of the local context and to support future initiatives that promote physical activity among women.



Coming together for Inclusive Sports Festival

In September, we worked alongside Wakefield Council to host the district's first Inclusive Sports Festival, to promote and encourage physical activity for people with disabilities.

Disabled people and people with long-term health conditions are less likely to meet the **Chief Medical Officers recommended levels of physical activity** than those without a disability and/or long-term health condition. We wanted to bring partners together to see if we could work collaboratively to develop, improve and promote the sport and physical activity opportunities available to people with disabilities/long-term health conditions in the district.

Working with local activity providers and clubs, VCSE organisations and statutory services, we organised two 'Inclusive Sport Festivals'. People had the opportunity to come and try various activities including wheelchair basketball, boccia, visually impaired cricket and rugby league. All these sessions were delivered by local partners who offer regular activities across Wakefield.

Each festival was also supported by various organisations that don't deliver sport and physical activity, but have services that people could engage with, such as the Canal & River Trust, Sense, and Wakefield Adult Social Services.

We now have a network of partners who are all committed to continuing to work with each other. The aim is to run events on an annual basis, identify and fill any gaps in provision, and continue to support one another to create the best opportunities for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.



Supporting volunteers in grassroots football

Throughout 2024, we've worked with West Riding FA and The FA to deliver one of five volunteer pilot projects nationally that would recruit, retain and reward volunteers across West Riding.

There are 1.4 million grassroots football volunteers in England but recent FA surveys have shown that they don't always feel appreciated but they are critical to grow the game and provide the best experience for players.

Throughout this project we provided dedicated club and league support, establishing a West Riding FA youth council, toolkits and resources for clubs and leagues to use as well as stakeholder mapping for wider support outside of football for volunteers and their organisations.

The project has showcased the importance of volunteering and the volunteers that are the backbone of so many community clubs, but are often underappreciated. Having a designated space to talk about volunteering, recruitment and recognition of volunteering has changed the thought processes and behaviour of those involved and will now be rolled out to support the wider football community in West Yorkshire.

This project has created tools for clubs to use to aid their volunteer recruitment and broken down self imposed barriers that can stop clubs asking for help.



“

I feel we have stuff in place now to manage volunteers in a much better way and to get the most out of people and for them to feel quite fulfilled with their volunteering. This is a great thing and makes me feel a lot better.”

13,493



Children and young people accessing activities through Opening School Facilities (Year 2)

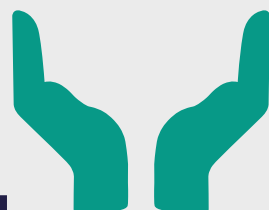


460

People attending our PE conferences

125

clubs supported



31

NGBs supported

8,624



Number of people in the wider community accessing activities through Opening School Facilities



125

Schools using the Creating Active Schools framework

733



People attending YSF training events

645

Schools taking part in School Games events
(2023/24 academic year)

14,043

Children taking part in School Games events
(throughput – 23/24 academic year)

87

School Games events
(2023-24 academic year)



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