

**CCIN Member Organisation submitting application:** Preston City Council

**Project Title:** Unlocking the Potential of Preston's Young People

**Name of CCIN Lead Councillor/Officer:** Rachel Stringfellow

**Partner organisations:** Fishwick Rangers Youth & Community Development Scheme and Preston United Youth Development Project

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### **Background and proposal from original bid**

In the autumn of 2020 Preston City Council funded a Cooperative Recovery Programme for organisations from within Preston's Black and minoritised communities which was delivered by Stir to Action. The purpose was to introduce participants to examples of cooperative and community enterprises developed by Black and minoritised communities in the UK and internationally and to raise interest in such models as an option to address community needs in Preston. The Council invited organisations from Preston's Black and minoritised communities to participate in the programme in recognition of the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on these communities.

Two of the groups involved, Fishwick Rangers Youth and Development Scheme (FRYDS) and Preston United Youth Development Programme (PUYDP), are committed to working with young people in their communities. At the outset of the programme representatives from these groups stated that they knew little or nothing about cooperatives but by the end they felt they had a much better idea of their potential in their communities and were interested in exploring other opportunities linked to cooperative development, including opportunities to support their work with young people. It was for this reason that the Council approached them early in 2021 and asked them to consider applying for the CCIN Policy Prototype funding.

Both organisations are very 'hands on' and have over ten years' experience working directly with young people in their communities to promote health and wellbeing through sports activities. They deliver structured activity programmes at evening and weekend sessions and across school/college holidays. However much of this work was disrupted by Covid which also revealed areas of deprivation in Preston which they were not reaching. So they were keen to use the opportunity of some additional funding to target young people most adversely affected by the crisis, offering structured football, dodgeball and gym sessions on Friday and Saturday nights at FRYDS's Sports City base in Preston. Their intention was to target those from Preston's most deprived communities, including offenders/or at risk of offending and young people out of school/or at risk of exclusion.

The organisations emphasised too that while the main focus of the sessions would be on physical fitness, they knew from their experience that the benefits would be more holistic as physical fitness opens up new opportunities and helps young people make more positive

contributions in education, work and socially. So at the start of the programme they would encourage young people to consider what they wanted to achieve through their participation not just in terms of physical fitness, but by addressing other issues of concern to them.

### ***Proposed aims***

- To reach out to some of Preston's most vulnerable young people by working with local youth centres, clubs and secondary schools, as well as the police and community action groups in the most deprived areas of Preston.
- To deliver a structured physical activity programme to participants over a 12 week period.
- To encourage participants to consider what they hoped to achieve through the programme.
- To host a 'graduation' event at the end of the programme with families and friends to reinforce the young people's sense of achievement through their participation.

### ***Proposed outcome***

- To increase the life skills and confidence of participants improving their chances of employment and re-engagement in learning.

### **Progress**

#### ***Project delivery***

Ten young men took part in the programme which finished in July. They were all aged between 14 and 16, able bodied and of Pakistani heritage and were from the wards of St Matthews, Fishwick and Frenchwood and Deepdale. St Matthews is one of the most deprived 10% of wards nationally, and Fishwick and Frenchwood and Deepdale are in the 20% most deprived.

The group included two offenders, two ex-offenders and five young men at risk of exclusion from school. All were recommended to the programme by community leaders

The reasons the young men gave for wanting to join the programme included:

- to improve their fitness
- to find a safe place to enjoy taking part in sport
- to make new friends
- to stay away from criminality
- to have a better chance of getting a job
- to feel more confident.

The programme took place over 12 weeks at evening sessions at FRYDS's Sports City base in Preston. Sports activities included football, dodgeball and gym sessions

### ***Project outcomes***

At the end of the programme participants reported that they felt in a much better position to work towards getting a job and that they felt more confident. To encourage them to continue their engagement with youth services, the programme signposted them to other activities offered by FRYDS and to other sports opportunities at the local leisure centre.

The graduation event did not take place as funding was not sufficient to cover the expected cost. However even without this event, participants reported enhanced confidence and self-esteem and a desire to be more involved in their local community.

### ***Challenges***

The restrictions imposed by Covid, home working and the long term sickness absence of the lead officer for young people within the Council's Community Engagement team has meant that the Council has not been able to work as closely with the delivery partners for this project as originally envisaged, nor draw the learning from the project into the wider group represented by the Preston Youth Forum. Though this has not affected direct project delivery, the expected engagement with the Council's Community Engagement team has not taken place.

### **Alignment of the project with the values and principles of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network**

The project provides a clear example of CCIN's commitment to invest via member councils in the work of local community organisations, in this case two groups working with some of the most vulnerable young people of Pakistani heritage in Preston. Both groups had recently participated in a Cooperative Recovery Programme commissioned by Preston City Council to raise awareness and interest in cooperative business models. The CCIN funded project, which directly addressed the core mission of these organisations to improve the life chances of vulnerable young people, underscored the cooperative values and principles introduced in the programme including equal partnership with communities, collective action and empowerment. The 'cooperative difference' in this case directly benefited ten vulnerable young men and indirectly supported the work of two key community partners.