

GOVERNMENT UK

From: [Ministry of Justice](#), [The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP](#), and [The Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP](#)

23 January 2023

Youngsters to take up football, boxing and rugby in £5 million bid to cut crime

Thousands of troubled teens to benefit from cash boost to local sports groups.

- Hundreds of organisations win cash to run projects for young people and cut crime
- Deputy Prime Minister and Sky Sports’ Jobi McAnuff see sporting success in action at ThruLife

Thousands of at-risk teens are set to pick up their racquets and lace up their football boots as part of a bid to keep them on the straight and narrow, the Deputy Prime Minister has announced today (21 January 2023).

More than 200 grassroots organisations across England and Wales have been awarded cash from the government’s £5 million Youth Justice Sports Fund to run local sports schemes – from climbing to kayaking – that will help keep vulnerable young people away from crime and antisocial behaviour.

The number of children caught up in crime is at a historical low – falling by 81 percent since 2010 but youth crime still costs the taxpayer £1.5 billion a year.

Research shows 80 per cent of prolific adult offenders started on their path of crime when children, making the need to steer more young people away from lawbreaking all the more critical.

Announcing the news, the Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab visited ThruLife – one of the projects which have been awarded funding – at a local school in Tottenham, north London.

Joined by ThruLife founder Richard Allicock and Sky Sports pundit Jobi McAnuff, the Deputy Prime Minister swapped into his trainers as he joined penalty practice with youngsters at their after-school football club.

Deputy Prime Minister, Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor, Dominic Raab, said:

I know first-hand how powerful sport and mentoring can be in turning young lives around.

Sport has the power to boost confidence, build resilience and teach discipline, and evidence suggests sports can be effective in reducing offending among young people. That's why we're supporting over 200 organisations across England and Wales to encourage more young people to engage with sport and stay away from crime.

One of the surest ways to keep young people on the right path is to give them the skills to succeed in life – something sports schemes can provide, building young people's resilience, self-confidence and discipline while engaging in a fun activity.

Emerging evidence suggests that sports-based intervention programmes – such as the Youth Sports Fund – can lead to improvements in offending. We know that early intervention done well reduces offending, for example, the

Supporting Families programme showed a 35 per cent reduction in youth prison sentences and a 15 per cent reduction in youth convictions.

Former Crystal Palace midfielder, Sky Sports commentator, and ThruLife ambassador Jobi McAnuff said:

Organisations like ThruLife do amazing work. I know how important activities and places like this are, and to have positive role models, particularly in areas like this where I grew up.

You can't take shortcuts in life, whether that's to be a professional footballer or whatever you want to achieve. There will be tough times in life, so if you have a passion for something like sport, it can help you to stay positive and committed.

Tom* who regularly attends ThruLife said:

ThruLife has helped me to grow in confidence through the sports sessions I attend teaching me and others different skills that would better place us on our journey through life, and to help us make positive choices.

Richard Allcock, the founder of Thru Life, said:

We are delighted to have been awarded this funding, which will help us to continue the positive work that we are doing in the community but also extend

our offer to engage with more young people across the borough of Haringey utilising the powers of sport through our mentoring offer.

In November last year, the Deputy Prime Minister invited sports charities and organisations from across the country to bid for the £5 million fund, which saw hundreds of sports schemes apply.

Today, over 200 organisations across England and Wales have been awarded cash to run projects from climbing to boxing with vulnerable teens. Bidders were marked on whether they could show a track-record of helping young people at risk of falling into crime and antisocial behaviour to keep their noses clean.

The £5 million pot of money builds on the government's existing support for local authorities' Youth Offending Teams nationwide – which has seen over £730 million worth of funding provided in the last 5 years.

Minister for Sport, Civil Society & Youth Stuart Andrew said:

We believe every young person should get the best start in life. Doing sport is a brilliant way of building focus and discipline while also improving physical health and stopping people becoming involved in crime.

This funding will help make sure people are set on the right path from the outset.

The Sports Fund has been co-ordinated by StreetGames and the Alliance of Sport for Criminal Justice, with the support of the Sport for Development Coalition – an umbrella of more than 250 charities in the sports sector.

Stuart Felce, StreetGames Director of Sport and Community Safety, said:

At StreetGames we believe that community sport, delivered in the right way, can have a transformational impact on children's lives and the communities they live in. We're really excited to be partnering with the Sport for Development Coalition and the Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice to deliver this ambitious new programme from the Ministry of Justice. This investment in sport will support voluntary and community sports organisations to carry out targeted work to enhance positive outcomes for vulnerable children, providing the practical and emotional support they need to grow and helping to keep them and their communities safe.

Hitesh Patel, Executive Director of the Coalition, added:

Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour is a core element of the Coalition's [#OpenGoal framework](#), which shows how the multiple returns on investment created by sport for development can help to generate significant

public cost savings. We are delighted to be working alongside StreetGames and the Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice to ensure this new funding supports and strengthens those organisations that can already demonstrate the positive social impact they are having on their local communities.

The funding also delivers on the commitment made in the [Prisons Strategy White Paper](#) – published in December 2022 – to cut youth crime and create safer streets.

Notes to editors

- Tom's name has been changed to protect his identity.
- [Over three-quarters](#) of adult prolific offenders received their first caution or conviction as a juvenile.
- The Youth Justice Sports Fund is the first of its kind from the Ministry of Justice, driven by this government to urge young people across the country to engage with a range of sports workshops, schemes and classes to build essential life skills while staying away from crime.
- About the Sport for Development Coalition: The Coalition brings together more than 250 charities, networks and organisations using targeted sport and physical activity-based interventions to address key health and societal inequalities across the UK. This includes national networks such as StreetGames and the Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice. Through its #OpenGoal framework, the Coalition aims to demonstrate the multiple returns on investment that targeted interventions can generate in disadvantaged communities, and potential public cost savings for policy-makers. The Coalition is funded by Sport England, Comic Relief and Laureus. For more information and media enquiries, contact Simon Lansley 07736 162839 slansley@sportfordevelopmentcoalition.org

Read more about:

- [ThruLife](#)
- [StreetGames](#)
- [Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice](#)
- [Sport for Development Coalition](#)