



KEEPING YOUNG LONDONERS SAFE

— OCTOBER 2025 —





Youth engagement sessions with Brentford FC Community Sports Trust

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Keeping Young Londoners Safe

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LONDON UNITED: GREATER TOGETHER

London United is an **extraordinarily unique partnership of 17 established youth and community specialists on a mission to use football to connect with Londoners and improve their lives.**

Harnessing the energy that comes from the rivalry and competition on the football pitch, London based professional football Club Community Organisations (CCOs) joined forces off the pitch over 11 years ago, acknowledging that they are greater together than the sum of their parts.

With an **extensive infrastructure and capacity, plus four decades of frontline experience,** London United responds to some of the biggest challenges across London by intentionally leveraging the attributes of football and sport to deliver social impact in communities.

London United delivers a wide and significant body of work across the capital and into surrounding counties. In the last annual period for which full data is available **nearly a quarter of a million participants were engaged in CCO projects across London.**

In commissioning this report, London United sought to **identify and understand the design and delivery of interventions aimed at keeping young Londoners safe.** Specifically looking at projects and practices which protect and proactively support young people from the risk of crime, violence and exploitation by moving them towards achieving positive outcomes in education, employment and health.



FREDDIE HUDSON London United Chair & Head of Arsenal in the Community

Despite our on-pitch rivalries, London's professional football clubs have been working together for decades off the pitch to support Londoners through some of society's toughest challenges. Over 10 years ago, we formed London United to formally recognise that in partnership we can deliver even more for our communities.

It's with great pride that I introduce this report on such an important area of our collaborative work. The current approaches to helping keep young Londoners safe have been shaped by years of learning from our community projects stretching back to the 1980s.

The outcomes in this report demonstrate a unique and significant contribution to youth safety in London. The compelling data reflects a clear trend: football has a natural ability to connect and positively engage with young people especially those that are struggling in some way. We deliver a range of protective factors and meaningful outcomes, often to those that need it most. We know we are limited on our own, but when football clubs act as anchors, and wrap the expertise of partners around our work, we can build respect and trust with individuals, groups and communities.

Partnerships are essential to our community projects and the outcomes we deliver. A new strategic partnership with the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit is a big step forward. While there isn't a magic solution our clubs or partners can draw upon, this report demonstrates that 30,000 young lives in the capital were positively impacted by our support during 2023-24.

We would like to thank all our partners from the statutory and community sectors: especially the Premier League and the Premier League Charitable Fund who have funded, guided and strategically positioned much of our community work for over two decades. Thanks also to Substance for diving deep into our youth safety offer and compiling this report. Their understanding of who we are, what we do and how we do it, is why we trust them to articulate London United.

SANGITA PATEL Head of Programmes, Substance

This research conducted by Substance has shown that London United tackle some of the biggest challenges facing young people's safety in London, by intentionally leveraging the attributes of football and sport to deliver social impact across the capital.

The research which aimed to identify, gather and describe the projects that characterise London United's portfolio of services designed to support and protect young people from the risks of crime, violence, and exploitation, by creating safe environments, building resilience, providing positive opportunities and equipping young people with the tools they need to avoid or reduce involvement in criminal behaviour.

The research highlighted that London United's approach to keeping young people safe includes:

- Getting to know young people and engaging them appropriately through **universal or targeted provision**
- Working with key partners in community safety and youth justice in a **collaborative and data-driven approach**
- **Engaging with evidence and intelligence safeguard and manage risks** prior to engagement and in real-time.
- Using **suitable settings and engagement approaches** such as pupil referral units, custodial settings and prisons, as well as 'non-clinical' neutral settings.
- **Having robust governance, accountability and administration** processes including thorough record- keeping, attending panels and safeguarding meetings.
- Regenerating derelict or unsafe spaces to **provide new versatile safe spaces.**
- Securing **funding from diverse sources to deliver outcomes** that matter.
- Authentically **shining a light on the real lives of young Londoners.**



£7.84m

invested into London United's youth safety work in 2023-24

100

individual youth safety projects delivered by LU's CCOs across 30 London boroughs

31

out of 33 London boroughs benefit from youth safety interventions

30k

young Londoners engaged in universal and targeted youth safety projects

608

primary schools
(34% of state primaries in London)



181

secondary schools
(35% of state secondaries in London)



30

Pupil Referral Units/
alternative provision settings
(50% of current)



11

prisons / youth
offending institutions
(78% of current)



SCALE OF LONDON UNITED'S DELIVERY ACROSS LONDON

In 2023-24, over **£7.84m** was invested into **London United's youth safety work**, this is a quarter of the overall investment secured by CCOs for all frontline projects across the Capital.

The London United network of 17 CCOs individually deliver over **100 different interventions across 31 London boroughs** aimed at keeping young Londoners by supporting them away from engaging in first acts of crime or violence as well as safely reducing further offending behaviours.

Over **30,000 young Londoners** participate in **interventions that are offered universally** (free and available for everyone) including Premier League funded flagship engagement programmes Premier League Kicks and Premier League Inspires, which along with other preventative projects **provide young Londoners with opportunities for empowered participation and development of protection factors which help to keep them safe.**

London United delivery in numbers:

- Active support within **608 primary schools** (34% of state funded primaries in London)
- Interventions delivered in **181 secondary schools** (35% of state funded secondaries in London)
- Targeted activity in **30 (50%) of current Pupil Referral Units/ alternative provision settings (including free schools and academies) and SEND/ ECHP dedicated schools.**
- Dedicated support within **11 (78%) of prisons/ youth offending institutions** across London, Middlesex, Essex as well as in Heathrow Immigration & Detention Centre.



Chelsea FC Foundation host Surrey Police women's football team along with female students from local schools

INVESTMENT SECURED BY LONDON UNITED FOR YOUTH SAFETY INTERVENTIONS

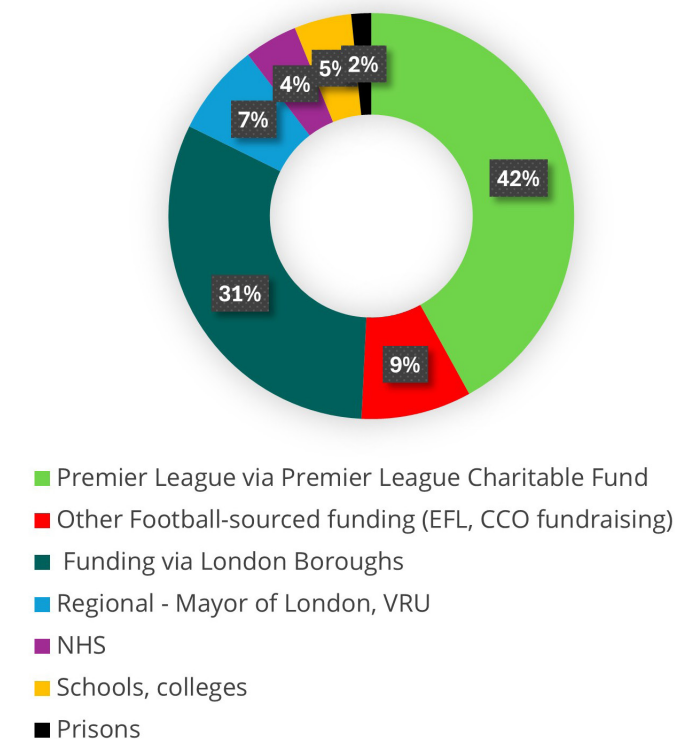
The funding secured CCOs for youth safety provision is broadly derived from two main sources:

1. 51% of investment is secured from football sources which includes the Premier League, English Football League (EFL) and funding generated by CCOs directly through charitable fundraising activities including events, running challenges, applications to trusts/foundations, and via philanthropy.
2. 49% of funding is secured through successfully tendering and contracting with the public sector including:
 - Education institutions (schools, colleges and pupil referral units),
 - The Mayor's Office and London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).
 - A significant proportion from individual London boroughs in the form of commissions and service contracts with children's services, youth justice, virtual schools, targeted youth support and youth work, and primary care or Public Health.

£3.96m (just over 50%) of funding goes into discrete youth safety interventions designed and delivered individually by CCOs enabling them to fill gaps and meet community need working at a hyper-local level.

These are complemented by several centrally commissioned several centrally commissioned programmes delivered across London by multiple CCOs, including the NHS partnered Advantage mental health referral programme, EFL's employability Training Ground, London VRU's MyEnds, Premier League Kicks and Premier League Inspires.

Key Sources of funding for London United's youth safety delivery



"Our longevity is a huge benefit. We're rooted in our communities. And because we're seen as an extension of the football club we get better traction with communities and partners than traditional services. CCOs get things done when problems or issues arise we can be dynamic, fluid, solution-focused."

Jason Morgan MBE, Chief Executive at Charlton Athletic FC Community Trust.



Awards presentation at the Premier League Kicks London Regional Tournament

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The London United CCOs have long-since recognised and respected their inter-dependency with the London community network, policy specialists and public sector agencies. **CCOs understand the complexity of factors that interact to cause youth offending and violence and recognise that the value of partnership working** is never more relevant than in youth safety and youth justice policy.

80% of London United CCOs partner with their respective youth justice boards, Police, safeguarding or community safety panels and gang partnerships. This ensures that **provision is developed according to community needs, through listening to local expertise and intelligence.**

For example, West Ham, Millwall, Crystal Palace, QPR, Arsenal, Leyton Orient and Tottenham Hotspur are all actively engaged with **multi-stakeholder violence reduction partnerships, sharing insight, utilising and valuing hyper-local knowledge** provided by grassroots organisations set-up to tackle knife-crime, support victims and their

families, or specialists such as counselling or first responder charities, such as Spark 4 Life and Ben Kinsella Trust.

Partnership working is key within London Violence Reduction Unit's MyEnds. MyEnds is a community-led initiative that provides local funding and support to tackle violence in areas with high and sustained levels of violence.

Several CCOs are involved with the MyEnds programme working collaboratively with local partners to deliver hyper-local interventions that tackle youth violence including:

- Arsenal in the Community
- Millwall Community Foundation
- Palace for Life
- Tottenham Hotspur Foundation
- West Ham United Foundation



Advantage Mentoring programme delivered at West Ham United Foundation

TARGETED SUPPORT FOR LONDON'S VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE

London United's well-established track record of prevention work has evolved to respond to the need for more targeted support for vulnerable young Londoners.

The **transition into secondary and tertiary prevention work** over the last few years has been key as CCOs turn their **focus more readily to those who are already known to youth justice agencies** due to involvement in risky behaviours like offending or gang associations and / or are missing from education. **Targeted work makes up 35% of London United's youth safety portfolio, accounting for 44% of total funding**, at an estimated £1,291 per head.

There is a shift in the nature of funders and their funding objectives, towards public sector agencies including borough community safety commissioners, Pupil Referral Units, the London Violence Reduction Unit and City Hall, with targeted objectives and nuanced outcomes to **support victims of crime, reduce previous offending behaviours, break cycles of violence, and optimise teachable moments within youth custody settings.**



Mentoring at QPR in the Community Trust

Data provided by CCOs highlights the **breadth of a skilled workforce responsible for the design and delivery of youth safety projects.** From senior leaders to coaches and mentors: staff are qualified and experienced in youth work, gangs work, teaching and pedagogy, trauma-informed practice and safeguarding.

The research highlights that London United CCOs consistently **exhibit agility, adaptability, and effectiveness in meeting the evolving needs of communities** – and have done so for many years. CCOs have become models of innovation and problem-solving, using a “can-do” approach to service delivery, especially in response to complex social issues.

The main building blocks within this approach:

- Develop bespoke person-centred solutions ('personalisation').
- Provide holistic, multi-faceted support including mentoring, coaching, goal-setting, personal development and wellbeing support.
- Build alternative pathways away from crime with employability and training support.
- Using outreach and participatory approaches to engage the hardest to reach young people (custody suites, detached, hyper-local support)
- Re-engaging individuals into education and learning.

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH UNIVERSALLY OFFERED PREVENTION WORK

Building on decades of youth and community delivery, 65% of London United's youth safety portfolio work is universally offered, quality-assured prevention work, delivered all-year round with the aim of building protection factors to support young Londoners to truly thrive, and and reduce the risks associated with offending and violence.

CCOs use **engaging youth work approaches to help participants navigate their formative years** transitioning from child to young person and from young person to young adult.

Through supporting physical and mental health, stimulating a love for learning, **believing in young peoples' potential, nurturing inner capabilities and building a sense of belonging,** risks associated with youth offending are reduced. Prevention work uses non-autocratic approaches and activities co-designed with participants. Sessions are group-based with average staff to participant ratios of 1:14.

Young people attend on a 'drop-in' basis. Where referral pathways are in place, for example via school pastoral care, sessions are designed to have recreational appeal so any barriers to participation and enjoyment are actively minimized or eliminated.

Prevention work accounts for 56% of London United's total funding for youth safety interventions, which is an estimated £158 per head. In the main this is secured from football bodies, schools, corporates and philanthropic Trusts/ Foundations.

CCOs and the Clubs themselves provide additional investment through **unique in-**

kind value in the form of access to facilities, stadium tours and special events, match-day tickets and inspirational opportunities, as well as through their own fundraising efforts including challenges, events, legends matches and fundraising from fans.



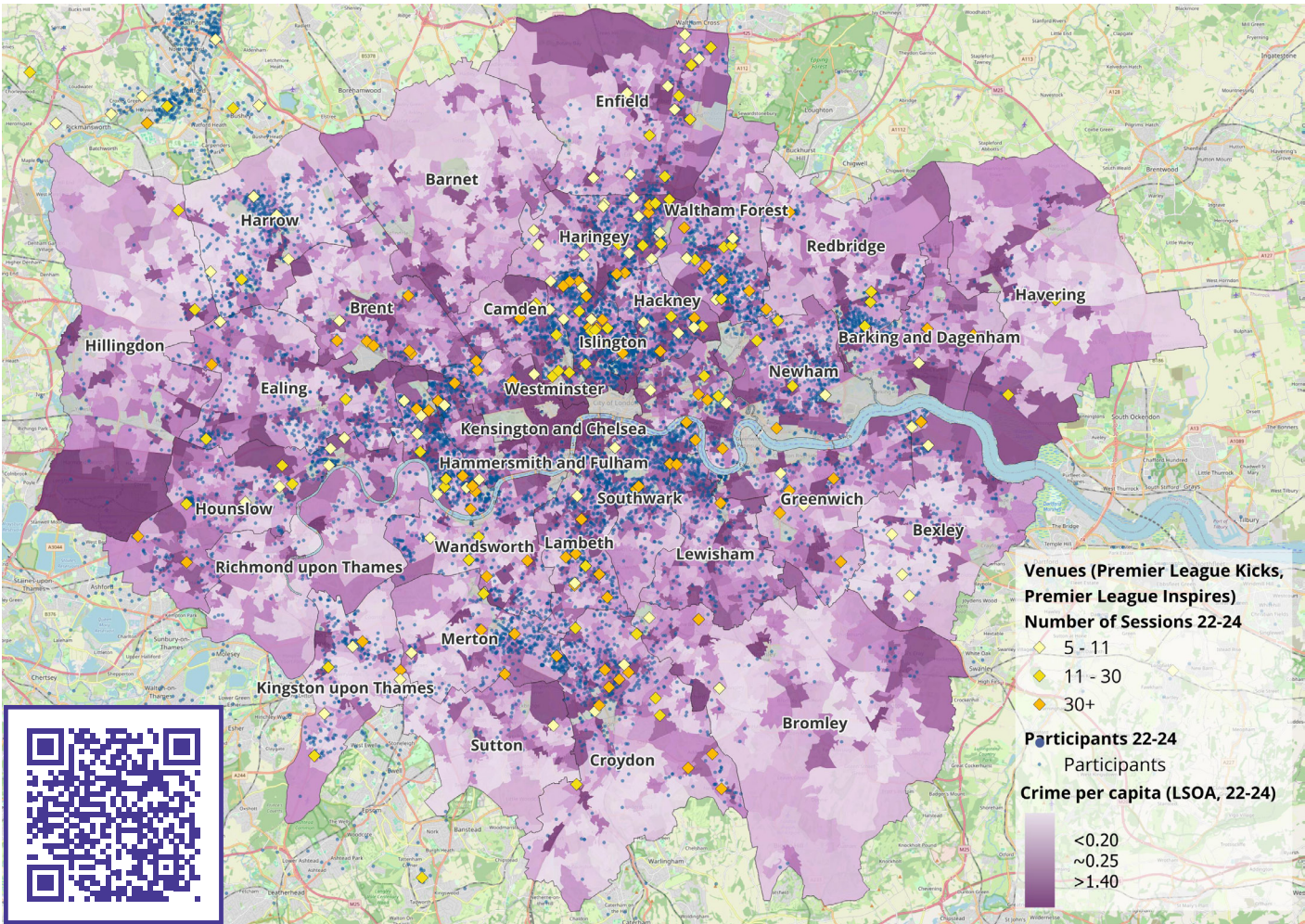
Declan Rice supporting Arsenal's No More Red campaign tackling knife crime

SNAPSHOT OF DELIVERY ACROSS LONDON

The image below shows the coverage and extent of sessional delivery of two programme Premier League Kicks and Premier League Inspires which are delivered by the majority of London United CCOs.

The map shows the extent of participants (represented by blue dots) and delivery sites (represented by yellow squares) accessing both programmes, mapped against London's LSOA rate of crime (count of crimes/ population record during 2022-24).

Scan the QR code on the map below to view the Metropolitan Police Recorded Crime: Geographic Breakdown.



CREATING SAFE SPACES

As well as operating outreach services CCO's have developed their own facilities and hubs in communities that lacked vital provision or safe spaces to meet, play sport and learn. Several CCOs working in collaboration with the community have delivered **significant improvements to physical spaces and infrastructure by upgrading derelict or unsafe spaces which has helped to provide safe, accessible places for young people to gather and engage in positive activities.**

Arsenal, Brentford, Leyton Orient, Watford and West Ham have all designed and developed multi-use, multi-faceted centres by working in collaboration with local residents, community partners and other youth providers to upgrade derelict or unsafe spaces or through building brand new versatile community hubs.



This has helped to provide safe, accessible places for young people to gather and engage in positive activities. For example, over 1,500 young people per week use Watford's Cedars Youth and Community

Centre in Harrow which houses a sports hall, astroturf pitch, meeting rooms, ICT facilities, gym and a drama and music studio.

The process of creating these hubs is driven by the needs and input of the local community. By working closely and collaborating with residents, community partners, and youth service providers, CCOs ensure that the spaces are designed to reflect the needs and preferences of those who will use them.





AFC Wimbledon Foundation's Girls' Team at the Premier League Kicks London Regional Tournament

HOW LONDON UNITED'S YOUTH SAFETY WORK SUPPORTS THE LONDON VRU'S STRATEGIC APPROACH

London United's youth safety delivery aligns at every stage of the London Violence Reduction Unit's strategic approach to early intervention via the priority areas of:

- Reducing harm in early years through universal activity and targeted projects.
- Providing 'positive opportunities' through a wealth of assets, including unique football club-based experiences and enjoyable activities.
- Championing educational and learning outcomes via significant support to London's education system.
- Adopting youth work and mentoring approaches which nurture and value young people.
- Supporting community infrastructure through committed place-based approaches and provision of safe spaces.

VRU | MAYOR OF LONDON
VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT



Ledley King engaging with Tottenham Hotspur Foundation participants

KEY FINDINGS

The London United network recognise that they are greater working together than the sum of their parts, especially when it comes to tackling some of the most complex social issues in London. Specifically helping young Londoners to stay safe, by helping them to build resilience and equipping them with the tools they need to avoid or reduce involvement in criminal behaviour.

London United has over four decades of experience supporting communities which has evolved from delivering universally offered prevention projects through to more nuanced and specialist targeted services with some of London's most vulnerable and at-risk young people.



Charlton Athletic Community Trust's Youth Engagement Bus

London United CCOs do this through:

- **Innovative, Flexible solutions:** London United CCOs are flexible and agile, adjusting quickly to evolving social issues and responding to new challenges as they arise.
- **Skilled workforce with lived experience:** Having a workforce with firsthand knowledge of poverty or personal experience with the youth justice system helps young people to build essential trust and engagement in services.
- **Holistic, multi-faceted delivery:** Combining mentoring, learning, sport, personal development and connectivity creates a well-rounded support system. London United have shown it's not just about offering services but about genuinely meeting young people where they are and helping them to reach their full potential.
- **Strong Partnerships:** The strong network of partnerships with youth justice teams, grassroots community organisations, and football clubs ensures that efforts are aligned and coordinated so that young people are connected to the right resources at the right time.
- **Safe Spaces:** Providing safe, accessible spaces for young people to engage and ultimately thrive.



Rodrigo Muniz meeting young people at a Fulham FC Foundation community session

London United

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUBS IN OUR COMMUNITY



Community
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FOUNDATION



FOUNDATION



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