PALACE FOR LIFE

THE WAY AHEAD

OUR STRATEGIC INTENT – JULY 2026

For more than 30 years, we have used the power of sport to support young people across South London and every day we can see what happens when the right support is there at the right time. More often than not, it's a young person who once didn't believe in themselves beginning to realise that they can achieve.

We work with thousands of young people up to the age of 25 each year in classrooms, on football pitches, employment workshops and mentoring spaces. Time and time again, we see them prove that, with the right support, they can grow in confidence, improve their mental health, find work and achieve things they never thought were possible.

However we also know that for many young people growing up in South London, getting to that point is becoming even harder. So many are facing greater pressures on their mental health, fewer opportunities to get into work, concerns about community safety and a lot of uncertainty about what comes next. All this comes at a time when the services that have traditionally supported them are under increasing strain.

Our strategy has evolved in response to these challenges. We've thought carefully about where we can have the greatest impact, and that's where we'll focus our energy over the coming years.

It starts with reaching young people at an earlier age, because we know that the sooner we can support someone, the better chance we have of changing the course of their life. This means staying alongside young people for longer, building a trusted relationship from primary school, all the way to early adulthood. This way, when they need us most, we're already someone they know and trust.

We also know that not every young person starts from the same place in life. Some face challenges that make it harder to feel safe, succeed at school or see a positive future for themselves. Our new strategy sharpens our focus on the young people who need it most, with a particular emphasis on education, employment, confidence, wellbeing and safety.

Crystal Palace's recent success on the pitch has put us in a stronger position than ever to deliver on that ambition, and that success has brought greater attention to Palace for Life too. Appearing on the front of the men's first team shirts during a triumphant UEFA Conference League campaign and winning the FA Cup and Community Shield created a unique opportunity for us to build on the club's momentum and become an organisation that others look to for how the power of sport can create lasting opportunities for young people.

But the club's success means much more than trophies. When Crystal Palace returned to the Premier League in 2013, few expected us to establish ourselves for the long term, let alone go on to enjoy the most successful period in our history. It has become a story of belief, resilience and proving that expectations are there to be challenged.

If the club has shown us anything in recent years, it's what can be achieved when people are given the chance to realise their potential, and that's a powerful lesson for the young people we work with. Too many are defined by the challenges they face rather than the potential they have. Our job is to help them discover what they're capable of.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank our staff, volunteers, participants, supporters, partners and funders who make our work possible. We look forward to working alongside you as we continue creating opportunities for young people and helping communities across South London succeed.

Paul Cleal
Chair of Trustees



OUR MISSION & VISION

OUR MISSION is to support young South Londoners to unlock their potential through the power of sport, providing opportunities, inspiration and support to help them lead healthier, safer and more positive lives.

OUR VISION is a South London community with Crystal Palace F.C. at its heart, where every young person, regardless of their background, has the belief, support and opportunity to thrive.



OUR VALUES

WE ARE A TEAM

We work together, recognising our impact is collective. We value every role and voice, knowing our best ideas and outcomes come through collaboration.

WE ARE FOR ALL

We create environments where everyone feels safe, welcome, and able to thrive. We remove barriers, champion fairness, and hold ourselves to high standards in safeguarding and inclusion, so every young person, regardless of background or circumstance, has access to opportunity and support.

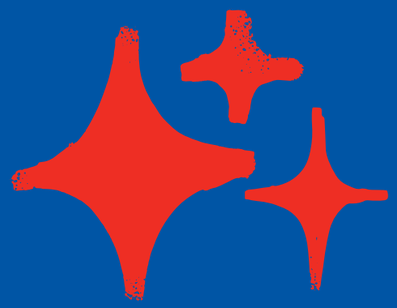
WE ARE AMBITIOUS

We strive to create lasting change in South London. We believe in what's possible, for the young people we support and for our organisation. We set high standards, push for growth, and aren't afraid to think bigger than what's comfortable.

WE ARE REAL

Real people, real challenges, real change. Authenticity underlines everything we do. We listen, learn and stay grounded in the communities we serve, not losing sight of why we exist.

WE WILL FOCUS ON FIVE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:



GROW OUR IMPACT ACROSS SOUTH LONDON

We will strengthen our reach and influence across South London through partnerships, improved facilities, expanded delivery and local relationships and trust, while ensuring our programmes remain accessible to those who need them most.

SUPPORT THOSE WHO NEED US MOST

We will focus our efforts on young people facing the greatest barriers. Improving their outcomes with a particular focus on education, employment, confidence, wellbeing and safety.

REACH MORE YOUNG PEOPLE EARLIER

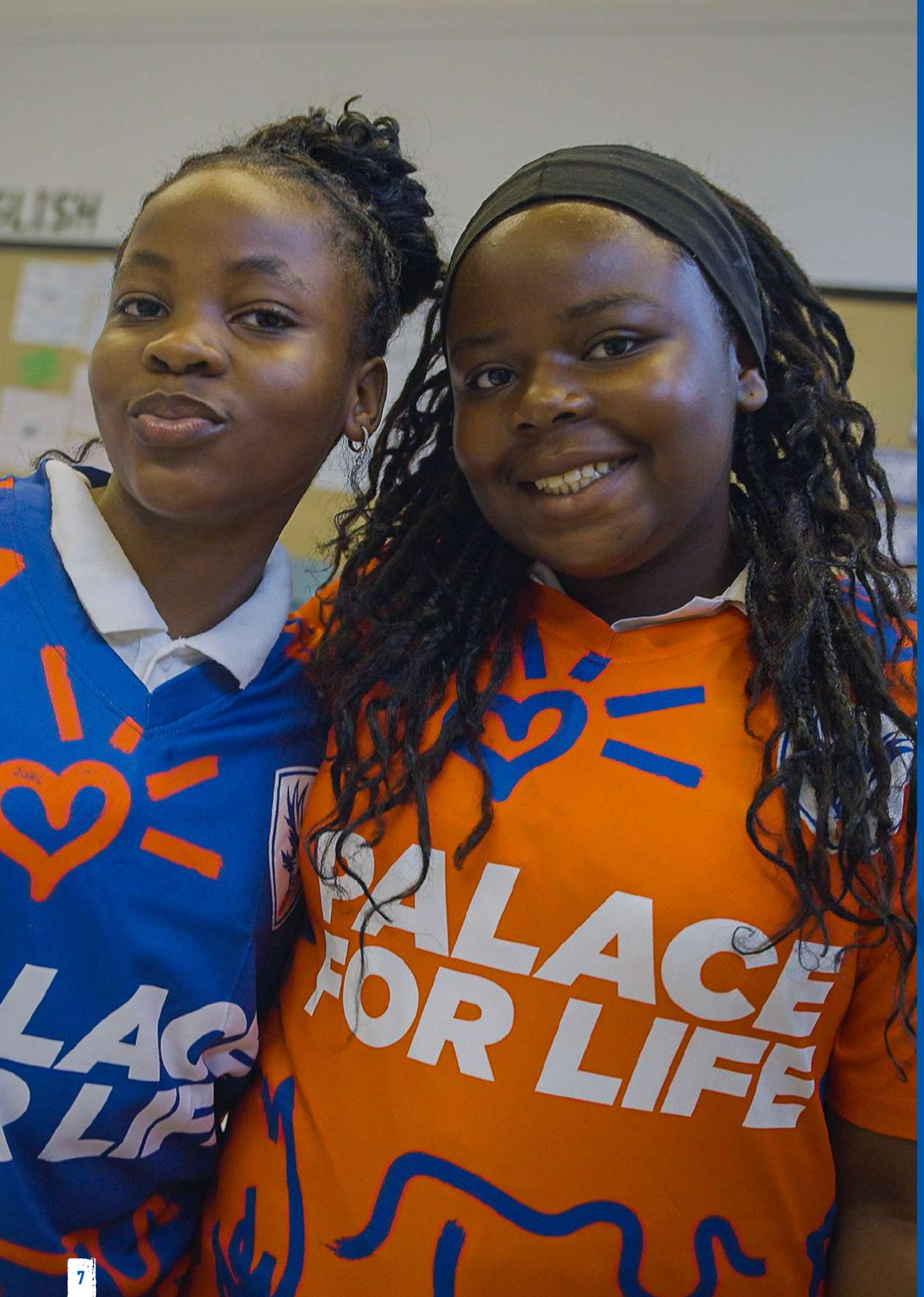
Reach young people earlier and stay working with them for longer, building trust from primary age through to early adulthood.

CREATE PATHWAYS INTO OPPORTUNITY

Build stronger pathways into education, training, employment and leadership. We will use the power of Palace and our networks to open doors and help young people build positive futures.

BUILD A STRONGER ORGANISATION

We will continue investing in our people, systems, safeguarding, governance and financial sustainability. Strong foundations will enable us to increase our impact and remain resilient in a changing environment.



UNDERSTANDING OUR COMMUNITY

To create meaningful change, we must understand the challenges facing the young people and communities we serve.

Across South London, young people are facing increasing pressures. Mental health concerns continue to rise, many families are feeling the impact of the cost of living, and schools, local authorities, healthcare services and community organisations are under growing strain. Early intervention and trusted local support have never been more important.

The transition into adulthood is becoming increasingly challenging. Around one in eight young people aged 16 to 24 are not in education, employment or training, while many lack the confidence, networks and opportunities needed to access employment and build successful careers. At the same time, the disability employment gap in London remains significant, creating further barriers for many young people.

Health challenges are also growing. Around two in five children leave primary school overweight or obese, fewer than half meet recommended daily activity levels, and referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services have more than doubled in the last five years.

These challenges are complex, but we believe every young person deserves the opportunity to thrive. By combining the power of sport with trusted relationships, early intervention and long-term support, we will help young people across South London build healthier, safer and more positive futures.

AROUND ONE IN EIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16 TO 24 ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING.

Office for National Statistics, February 2026

WHY PALACE FOR LIFE?

For more than 30 years, we have used the power of sport to support young people across South London.

Our connection to Crystal Palace F.C., together with the long-standing support of the Premier League, the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) and other partners, gives us a unique ability to engage, inspire and create opportunities. The Palace badge opens doors, helping us build trust with young people, families and communities. It creates opportunities to connect with those who may not otherwise engage with traditional support services and inspires young people to believe in what is possible.

Through our relationship with the Club, we can provide access to experiences, environments and role models that few organisations can offer. From Selhurst Park and the Academy to players, staff, supporters and partners, we use the power of Palace to raise aspirations and create opportunities.

But our impact goes beyond football. We are a trusted part of the South London community, with decades of experience supporting young people to improve their wellbeing, build confidence, develop skills and achieve their potential.

By combining the power of Crystal Palace with deep community roots, high-quality delivery and a long-term commitment to South London, we are uniquely positioned to help young people build healthier, safer and more positive futures.

THE PALACE BADGE OPENS DOORS, HELPING US BUILD TRUST WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.



UNDERSTANDING OUR CHALLENGES

The need for our work continues to grow, but so too do the challenges facing the communities we serve and the organisations supporting them.

Economic uncertainty, rising costs and increasing pressure on public services are creating a more complex environment for young people, families and charities alike. Demand for support is increasing at a time when many funding sources and community services are under pressure.

As a charity, we must also recognise the risks associated with our operating environment. A significant proportion of our income is linked to football funding, while our delivery model benefits from the close support of Crystal Palace F.C. and access to facilities across the Club's estate. Protecting and diversifying these relationships and income streams will be important to our long-term sustainability.

Trust is central to everything we do. The confidence placed in us by young people, families, partners and supporters has been built over many years and must never be taken for granted. Maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding, governance and delivery will remain fundamental to our success.

By recognising these challenges and planning for them proactively, we can strengthen our resilience and ensure we continue to support young people across South London for years to come.

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HOW WE DELIVER CHANGE

Everything we do is built around four interconnected areas of work.

- PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- ROUTES TO EMPLOYMENT
- SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Together, these programmes help young people build confidence, improve their wellbeing, develop new skills and access opportunities that can change the course of their lives.

RUNNING THROUGH EVERYTHING WE DO

Across all areas of our work, we will place particular focus on supporting young people facing the greatest barriers to succeeding. This includes those at risk of exclusion or exploitation, young people with special educational needs and disabilities, care-experienced young people, and those experiencing poor physical or mental health.

We will continue to grow opportunities for girls and young women, celebrate the diversity of South London's communities, and ensure our programmes remain accessible to those who need them most.

The safety and wellbeing of young people will remain at the heart of everything we do. Strong safeguarding practices, trusted relationships and high-quality delivery will underpin every programme, partnership and interaction.

By embedding inclusion, wellbeing, opportunity and safety across our work, we can create lasting impact for young people and communities across South London.


CRYSTAL PALACE F.C.
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PALACE FOR LIFE

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

WE WILL ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE FROM AN EARLY AGE THROUGH SCHOOL PROGRAMMES THAT DELIVER CLEAR AND LASTING IMPACT.

We will proactively expand our network of schools across South London, allowing us to provide early intervention for as many young people as possible.

A network of primary and secondary schools ensures that when a young person transitions into secondary school, they can continue to be supported by us.

Our schools-based offering will be made up of programmes addressing key issues:

- **HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES**
- **POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**
- **CONFIDENCE AND SENSE OF BELONGING**
- **MATHS AND ENGLISH INTERVENTION SUPPORT**
- **INTEGRATED SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND**

We will create inspiring experiences for pupils through the power of Palace, using our connection to Crystal Palace F.C. to engage young people and bring learning to life.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WE HAVE A KEY ROLE TO PLAY IN SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY AND GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY AND LEARN OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS.

We believe every young person deserves access to safe spaces, trusted adults and positive opportunities outside the classroom.

We will deliver free community sports sessions, workshops and targeted mentoring to individuals and communities where it is needed. With a particular focus placed on supporting those who that remain underserved, including young people at risk of exclusion, exploitation, crime, poor health or social isolation.

We will continue to support young people affected by, or involved in, crime through diversionary programmes, one-to-one mentoring and close partnership with the police, violence reduction units and other local agencies.

We will continue strengthening our impairment-specific disability provision, such as the DS Eagles and Powerchair sessions, while also embedding SEND provision across our community offer.

We will deepen our links with faith and ethnic communities, delivering programmes that build trust, strengthen cross-community understanding and show clearly that Palace is for all.

WE WILL DELIVER FREE COMMUNITY SPORTS SESSIONS, WORKSHOPS AND TARGETED MENTORING TO INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES WHERE IT IS NEEDED

ROUTES TO EMPLOYMENT

WE WILL SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE INTO EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT. WE WILL BE BOLD IN OUR AMBITION: TO BE ONE OF THE LEADING EMPLOYABILITY PROVIDERS FOR YOUNG SOUTH LONDONERS.

Too many young people have talent and ambition but lack the networks, confidence and opportunities needed to succeed. Our unique role is to bridge young people and employers, especially where some traditional services are untrusted or stigmatised.

Our employability work begins in schools, where we begin to upskill young people with skills and qualities needed for further education and the workplace.

Our programmes for 16–24-year-olds will continue to provide varied and crucial qualifications, insights and experiences across different industries.

We will use our unique position within the Palace community to connect young people with employers, mentors, training opportunities and real-world experiences, focusing on clear outcomes including entry into jobs, apprenticeships and training.





SPORT DEVELOPMENT

WE WILL DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY FOOTBALL AND SPORT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ACROSS SOUTH LONDON, SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.

We will continue growing our Soccer Schools and Player Development Centre programmes for boys and girls aged 5–16.

We will expand our offer to include post-16 college programmes, linking with our employability provision to support positive career pathways.

While our focus is not on producing elite athletes, we will continue creating opportunities for young people to progress through football pathways, providing bursaries to talented young players from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and pathways for the most talented into Crystal Palace's men's and women's academies.

Any surplus generated through commercial activity will be reinvested into our charitable work, helping us extend our impact across South London.

OUR FOUNDATIONS

Everything we achieve is built on strong foundations. We will continue investing in the people, systems, partnerships and governance that enable us to deliver high-quality support for young people across South London.

OUR PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Our staff and volunteers are our greatest asset. We will continue to build an ambitious, inclusive and supportive culture where people can thrive, develop their skills and deliver outstanding outcomes for young people.

BRAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFLUENCE

Our brand helps us build trust, attract support and inspire action. We will continue using the power of the Palace name and our growing profile to reach more young people, strengthen partnerships, increase awareness of our work and position Palace for Life as a leading voice for young people across South London.

PARTNERSHIPS

We achieve more when we work together. From Crystal Palace F.C., the Premier League, the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) and our supporters to schools, employers, funders, local authorities and community organisations, partnerships will remain central to how we extend our reach, improve outcomes and create opportunities for young people.

FUNDRAISING AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Growing our impact requires sustainable income. We will continue diversifying our funding through grants, partnerships, fundraising, events, individual giving and commercial activity, ensuring we remain resilient and able to invest confidently in our future.

SAFEGUARDING

The trust placed in us by young people, families and partners is fundamental to everything we do. We will continue to maintain the highest standards of safeguarding, ensuring every young person can access our programmes in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment.

FACILITIES

High-quality facilities help create high-quality experiences. We will continue developing relationships with schools, community organisations and venue partners to ensure young people can access safe, welcoming and inspiring places to learn, play and grow.

IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Understanding the difference we make is essential. We will strengthen how we measure and evidence impact, using data, participant feedback and lived experience to improve programmes, demonstrate outcomes and inform decision-making.

DATA AND TECHNOLOGY

Strong data systems help us build relationships, understand our communities and operate effectively. We will continue investing in technology and data management to improve efficiency, strengthen insight and support better experiences for participants, partners and supporters.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Strong financial controls and effective governance provide the stability needed for long-term success. We will continue to manage our resources responsibly, ensuring every pound is used effectively to maximise impact for young people.

GOVERNANCE

Our Board of Trustees provides leadership, challenge and accountability. We will continue strengthening governance, ensuring we have the expertise, oversight and strategic direction needed to deliver our ambitions and remain resilient in a changing environment.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE

Success will not be measured simply by the number of young people we reach, but by the difference we make in their lives and the strength of the organisation that supports them.

We want to be reaching more young people across South London, engaging them from an earlier age and remaining part of their journey for longer. We want more young people facing the greatest barriers to receive the support they need and achieve positive outcomes in education, employment, training, wellbeing and leadership.

We want girls, young people with disabilities and other underrepresented groups to see Palace for Life as a place where they belong, can build confidence and have opportunities to progress.

We want our impact to extend further through stronger partnerships, improved facilities and deeper trust within the communities we serve. We want our relationship with Crystal Palace F.C. and the wider Palace family to continue growing, creating greater opportunities for young people and stronger connections between the Club and its community.

We will know we have been successful if Palace for Life is recognised as a trusted, high-quality organisation that delivers meaningful change, is financially resilient and continues to play an important role in the lives of young people across South London.

Most importantly, we will know we have succeeded when more young people are healthier, safer, more confident and better equipped to fulfil their potential.



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