

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2023-05-YO22	Sport 4 Life UK
Visit Date	Visited By
30 <sup>th</sup> August 2023	Victoria Southwell
Overall aim of the funding	
Sport 4 Life will deliver wraparound employability and wellbeing support to young people with criminal convictions in Birmingham, via engagement in free-to-access community sports sessions combined with personalised one-to-one mentoring.	
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>Sport 4 Life (S4L) is a registered charity that was established in 2006 by two brothers who had a passion for sport, their local area, and the potential of all young people. In 2010 the organisation shifted their approach to a formal sport for development one rather than solely offering access to sporting activities. This was after consultation with young people from four local wards which showed that their needs transcended just being able to play sport and that they needed more tangible support. The CEO is one of the founders and S4L now employs 26 staff.</p> <p>The CEO is supported by 6 Trustees who bring skills and knowledge to the organisation that includes legal expertise, marketing and strategy, finance, employability, education, young people, and sport. The Head of Youth Programmes and Policy at the Organising Committee for the 2022 Commonwealth Games has just joined the board. Trustees meet four times a year but hold extra meetings outside of these should the need arise. There are two sub-committees; Finance and Remuneration and there is also an annual away day that focuses on strategy.</p> <p>S4L has a strategic plan that runs from 2022-2027 which they describe as their North Star guiding everything they do. It identifies five key priorities and each year they are broken down into an action plan with annual targets. The five priorities are; to grow and embed services, to drive through transformational improvements in services, to be the 'go to' youth employment charity for the region, to be one of the best places to work in the West Midlands and to make key contributions to our society and community. Trustees were involved in the co-production of the strategy (alongside other stakeholders such as staff, volunteers, funders, commissioners, and young people) and the annual targets are reported against at Trustee Meetings.</p>	
Leadership and expertise	
<p>At the assessment I met with Tom Clarke-Forrest (CEO and Founder), Alex Jeavons (Bid Manager) and Matthew Forsyth (Head of Operations).</p> <p>Tom studied sports science at university and after volunteering for a local youth charity started running free sports activities for young people unable to afford to join clubs themselves. Through this he built a strong understanding of the needs of young people from disadvantaged communities as he was seeing the same issues regularly in his interactions with participants. In 2012 through his guidance S4L adopted a more focused approach using sport 4 development interventions and became more intentional. Tom has driven this forward to the point where S4L is the leading sport 4 development agency in the West Midlands and has ambitions to grow its footprint.</p>	

### **Aims and Activities**

S4L's vision is a level playing field where every young person has the opportunity to create a better future for themselves. They aim to do this through delivering sports themed personal development services to support young people's journeys through education and employment.

S4L delivers work in five key areas;

Mentoring aims to give young people the confidence and skills to move into sustained education, employment, or training,

Employability skills get young people job ready and help them to find work,

Sports sessions which give young people the opportunity to play sports, stay active and have some fun,

Training and qualifications through a range of online and in person training courses and skills programmes to help a young person level up and improve their chances of moving into further education and employment, and

National Citizenship Service.

Annually over 2,000 young people attend Sport 4 Life sessions and in the past year 3,510 hours of sport, training and mentoring was delivered.

### **Safeguarding**

S4L has a number of clear Safeguarding policies linked to children and vulnerable adults and an additional document that outlines procedures for staff. This supplementary document provides an accessible version of the policy that staff can use to understand the key processes that need to be followed linked to any concerns that are identified. S4L use a safer recruitment policy when employing new staff and all new recruits participate in an online safeguarding course as well as an internal induction session linked specifically to S4L's approach to safeguarding. All staff receive annual safeguarding refresher training. The Head of Operations is the named Designated Safeguarding Lead in the policy and the Education and Skills Manager the Designated Safeguarding Officer. There is also a named Trustee in the policy.

Monthly safeguarding reviews take place across the organisation and any incidents are reported through a monthly SLT meeting and to Trustees quarterly. There is also an annual review with the Trustee who is the Safeguarding Lead. The purpose of this is to identify any trends or patterns, areas of concern and safeguarding training gaps. There is also an annual staff survey that looks at safeguarding practice, concerns, and staff training needs. This all informs the content of the annual safeguarding refresher training. There are strong links with the local MASH Team and each new referral has a risk assessment attached to them. There are around 10 concerns a year that S4L raise externally.

### **Finances**

Independently audited Financial Statements for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 show income of £1,397,157 against expenditure of £1,259,102 resulting in a surplus of £138,055. Net current assets amount to £416,388 and a reserve figure of £417,124 of which £376,399 is unrestricted. S4L's reserves policy is to hold, and maintain, cash reserves equivalent to three months of total unrestricted expenditure, restricted EET and NEET expenditure and the 'at risk' proportion of their NCS contract. Current unrestricted reserves exceed this total but will be in line with the target amount needed for the current financial year which has seen increased income and expenditure.

Budgets and funding predictions for the two-year period of the grant show an ambitious growth of income of around £500,000 annually. This links to an expansion of the footprint S4L has in the UK through working with local delivery partners in other areas.

Growth will be dependent on income being raised and there is a strong team in place to achieve this. Current activity will not be impacted by the growth plan and for the next two financial years over 68% of expenditure has been secured. Main funding comes from Sport England, Sport Birmingham, Sandwell Council, Henry Smith Charity and StreetGames.

Good financial systems are in place. Day to day management is undertaken by the Finance Officer, supported by the Finance Manager. The Finance Sub-Committee review management accounts and budgets which are signed off by the full board.

### **Current Situation and need**

By providing not only financial income, but also structure and purpose, secure employment is vitally important for young people with criminal convictions. However, only 17% of ex-offenders secure a job within a year of release and 96% of offenders released from custody are unemployed after 6 weeks.

The West Midlands has the 3rd highest rate of young people being cautioned or sentenced and in Birmingham specifically, serious youth violence offences rose by 41.5% in 2021/22 (Birmingham Youth Offending Service, 2022).

S4L knows from experience there is a direct correlation between the high levels of deprivation existing across Birmingham and the West Midlands and the rate of offending amongst its population. This was evidenced by Dr Alex Chard's research in 2021, commissioned by the West Midlands Combined Authority and West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. Dr Chard's research focussed on 80 young people in the West Midlands, identified by local Youth Offending Teams. Amongst many key findings, the report finds that: 'Poverty is the most significant structural issue to be addressed, in reducing the likelihood of children becoming involved in crime'. Dr Chard himself said of his report: "Poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion, linked with systemic failure to address their needs, creates a conveyor belt which propels vulnerable children towards exploitation and crime". With the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) showing that 43% of Birmingham's and 28% of the West Midlands' population living within the top 10% of deprived areas in England, S4L are committed to bridging this gap by creating tangible pathways to career progression.

S4L's proposed project will address the need to provide tangible employment opportunities for young people with criminal convictions, to prevent the likelihood of reoffending following their release. Their sport-for-development approach will support young offenders to engage in positive activities which prevent desire and opportunity to reoffend. By referring young offenders into sports sessions delivered within the city's most deprived communities, S4L will deliver quality diversionary activities led by staff qualified to lead structured and interactive sports sessions.

Tailored employability and wellbeing support will be delivered to 25 young people with criminal convictions, per year. Sport will be the key vehicle for engagement and each young person will receive over a 12-month period:

- Minimum 24 sports sessions
- One-to-one mentoring from a S4L Employability Mentor
- Sports Leaders Level 1/2 qualifications
- A minimum of five employability workshops
- A minimum of five life skills workshops
- Monthly social sports
- One employer-visit day

The programme has been designed to achieve eight key outcomes that will support a reduction in re-offending rates via a holistic model that addresses multiple key aspects of the young person's life in three core areas; social, socioeconomic and wellbeing.

### Expected changes in Year 1

#### Social Impact Area 1

Individual Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved life skills</li> <li>• Improved self-esteem</li> <li>• Improved motivation</li> </ul>
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#### Social Impact Area 2

Employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced employability skills</li> <li>• Increased sustained employment</li> <li>• Enhanced career prospects</li> </ul>
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### Request and Budget

S4L is requesting **£54,728** over 2 years for the costs of an employability and wellbeing project.

**£26,414 in year 1** - £15,921 (mentoring costs), £2,069 (qualifications), £2,367 (workshops), £2,040 (sports facility hire), £1,800 (social sports), £1,257 (management costs), £960 (sessional sports staff).

**£28,314 in year 2** - £17,035 (mentoring costs), £2,253 (qualifications), £2,570 (workshops), £2,160 (sports facility hire), £1,920 (social sports), £1,348 (management costs), £1,028 (sessional sports staff).

### Conclusion

Sport 4 Life is a leading organisation delivering high quality sport 4 development programmes across the West Midlands. They are led by a very skilled CEO who has impressively grown the organisation and taken it from a small charity delivering a range of sports sessions to a sophisticated and ambitious leader in intentional sports focused programmes. S4L is ambitious and has aspirations to grow their footprint to other regions across the UK and are deeply rooted in learning and understanding what works. This underpins all that they do both in terms of current delivery but also future plans. This commitment to evidence-based learning underpins this application and make this a strong proposal. The huge amount of expertise that S4L has around running employment programmes makes the planned approach a realistic and well planned one that is likely to achieve strong outcomes. It is recognised that employment is a key factor in a young person not reoffending and the structure of the programme ensures that the proposed outcomes link strongly to our strategy goals.

In the previous young offender round that had a focus on specific employment outcomes, we supported two organisations working in the West Midlands. One focused on the needs of young women and the other used interventions linked to media, so whilst there is a cross over in geography the planned interventions are entirely different. Therefore, it doesn't feel like there will be duplication and it is also unlikely the projects will attract interest from the same kinds of young people. However, there is the potential benefit of having three projects within the same locality as they could be encouraged to develop links and build relationships with each other. S4L has significantly more expertise around employment-based outcomes that the other two West Midlands based grantees so they could benefit hugely from being linked up. And the other applicants being assessed as part of this cohort would also benefit from S4L being part of the portfolio.

S4L has strong existing links with relevant agencies, who will be key referral routes into the project, and this will also ensure that the likely success of the project is high. The project has the right balance of sport focused activities to both initially engage participants and keep them engaged and start developing some of the key skills they will need to acquire to secure long term employment. The mentoring has been designed with a strong understanding of the likely needs of the young people who will join the programme and past outcomes that S4L have achieved with their young people suggests that this project will be an exciting and strong addition to the portfolio. With that in mind I would recommend support with a grant as requested.

**Recommended Priority Rating**

Risk = Low	Difference to organisation = High	Priority = High
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