Rochdale AFC
Community Trust

Supporting Children and Young People with SEND



Rochdale AFC Community Trust

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"You are the best because we do fun things that I can do"

"He loves coming each week and staff are understanding but firm which is fantastic for my son"

Rochdale AFC Community Trust

Our Activities

Our mission is to make Rochdale a better place to live, work and play - a place where ALL voices are heard, with five key values embedded in all that we do: high quality, fair, passionate, impactful and honest.

We provide a range of activities for children and young people with SEND, and are passionate about ensuring they are supported holistically with their health and wellbeing, and develop skills for later life.

151 children and young people have engaged in our activities in the past 18 months



Football and Multisport

We currently deliver two football sessions per week for children and young people with SEND (age 8 - 14 and age 12 - 17), with opportunities to play both recreationally and competitively against other SEND teams at football clubs up and down the country.

We also currently deliver two inclusive multisport sessions per week, for children and young people aged 5 - 16 and their siblings (with or without SEND).

Dale Geeks

Dale Geeks is a table-top gaming club, providing a safe and welcoming space for individuals aged 11 -17 to come together and engage in the world of table-top games. Whether they're experienced gamers or novices just embarking on their gaming journey, Dale Geeks offers a diverse range of games that cater to all interests and skill levels. From classic board games like UNO and Chess to immersive role-playing adventures like Dungeons & Dragons, there's something to captivate everyone's imagination.





Life Skills

We strive to ensure that our children and young people have access to opportunities, where they can be supported to achieve their goals. This has included through supporting SEND young people on outdoor residential activities, taking part in workshops such as mental wellbeing activities, stepping up to take on leadership roles for younger participants, and taking part in social action projects to make their voices heard and enact real change in their local communities.

Traineeships

We appreciate that the education system isn't for everyone, and that many have left the system without the qualifications they desired. Traineeships are a vital tool in helping young people and adults in Rochdale to develop the skills and experience they need to secure employment. The programme offers a combination of work experience, training, and support to help participants develop the confidence, skills, and qualifications they need to succeed in the workplace. We allow people to learn in unique environments, in a way which works for them; supporting everyone to reach their potential.



Thank you to our partners and funders who have supported us to positively impact the lives of so many children and young people in Rochdale Borough.

ROCHDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL

SPORT ENGLAND

Premier League Kicks

action together

yourtrust

7 Outcomes

Rochdale Borough has a 5-year plan for children and young people aged 0 - 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), for 2022-2027.

It has been developed in partnership with children, young people, parents, carers and representatives from the SEND stakeholder forum and SEND Alliance. It is for all children and young people with SEND (with or without a diagnosis), their parents/ carers, and the professionals who support them.

These outcomes are what children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities across Rochdale want life to be like, and what we are all working towards together.

The extent to which we, as a Charity, have contributed towards each outcome over the past 18 months differs, but we wholeheartedly believe that each one is vital in supporting our young people in their families, and have provided some evidence for the delivery of each.



Rochdale AFC Community Trust

My opinions are valued

Our mission is to make Rochdale a better place to live, work and play - a place where ALL voices are heard.

We have ensured that throughout our planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, young people's voices have been at the heart.

We surveyed all of the children and young people taking part in our football and multisport sessions, to find out whether they felt like they were listened to, and their opinions were valued. We found:

100% said **"I feel like people listen to me when I speak here"**

"We love how included staff make us feel"



Social Action

Social Action is a valuable activity for any and all young people to take part in - allowing them to take action on a community issue that they're passionate about. A central tenet of this activity is youth voice, with one of the #iwill principles of high quality social action being **'youth-led'; led, owned, and shaped by young people's ideas, needs, and decision making.**

But that's not all. Social action provides a brilliant opportunity for young people to **develop real life skills including confidence building, communication, leadership, healthy debating, and budget management.**

In May 2023, **we supported 11 young people with SEND to take part in an environmental social action project.**



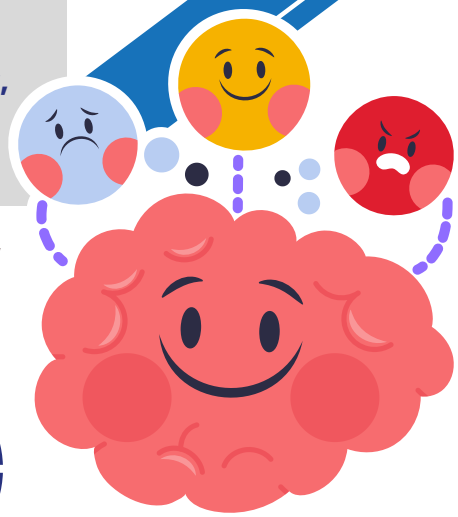


Rochdale AFC Community Trust

I am emotionally well

Much of our contribution towards ensuring our children and young people are emotionally well comes through their engagement in social and physical activity opportunities.

We do run a number of mental wellbeing programmes as a Charity, which are accessible and accessed by children and young people with SEND.



We surveyed all of the children and young people taking part in our football, multisport, and Dale Geeks sessions, to find out whether they felt that the sessions contributed towards them being emotionally well.

100% said **"I enjoy taking part in these sessions"**

92% said **"if I get upset or something isn't right, I know who I can talk to"**

Dale Geeks

Describe Dale Geeks in 1 word: Members have used words like **"creative", "fun", "exciting"** and **"joyful"**. These descriptors illustrate the club's ability to evoke positive feelings and excitement.

Comments like **"ecstatic", "I love DnD"** and **"best thing about my week!"** reflect the immense joy and satisfaction young people derive from their engagement with the club. Dale Geeks becomes a source of happiness, learning, and social interaction.

Hi, my name's Oscar. That's not my real name, but a name used to protect my identity.

I go to Primary School at the moment, and that's where I first met Chloe from Rochdale AFC Community Trust. She was running a 6-week mental wellbeing programme with my class, teaching us about confidence, resilience and who we can talk to. I really enjoyed it!

I was lucky too because I got to join the confidence building multisport programme after school, for people just like me. We got to try different sports in a safe space, and learn all of the different rules.

Now, I go to the Ability Counts football sessions at Rochdale AFC's stadium every week, and I love it!

Oscar's parent said: "Oscar is thriving here, due to support here it has helped Oscar be included in a group at school. He now plays football with friends most days!"



Rochdale AFC Community Trust

I am as healthy as possible

Having opportunities to be active is important for all children; particularly for their physical and social development. Yet the opportunities for young people with SEND are often lesser than those available mainstream.

Therefore, we work to create inclusive sessions where each young person is valued and their needs are met.



We surveyed all of the children and young people taking part in our football, multisport, and Dale Geeks sessions, to find out whether they felt that the sessions contributed towards them being as healthy as possible. Note: the question referring to exercise levels was asked only to those taking part in physical activity sessions.

88% said **"since joining this club, I do more exercise than before"**

100% said **"I feel like these sessions help to keep me healthy overall"**

Luke began attending our pan-disability sessions in May 2022, initially starting with inclusive multisport to build up his confidence, then transitioning to our pan-disability football sessions shortly after once he'd met the staff and felt physically able.

Luke has motor difficulties; due to his disabilities and the occasional need to use a frame, Luke doesn't participate in PE or go out at break times as he has been deemed 'high risk' by school staff. However, since becoming involved in our sessions, Luke has even attended our mainstream football holiday camps!

Luke's Mum said: "Luke struggles with his mobility but when he attends Tuesday multi-sport and Wednesday football he is now more confident to go on his own once he arrives to the session with me. Luke has learnt a lot of new sports and his confidence has really grown, he's made new friends and has also learnt to be patient and know when to wait his turn when needed. With Luke making new friends at the groups, he is more excited to come to the sessions as he is able to see his friends and enjoy himself."



Building Confidence

It's important to us not only that opportunities are available, but also that children feel able to access them. Through our afterschool confidence building programme, we found:

67% **of children increased their confidence**

24% **children indicated their mood, using emoji's, at the start and end of each session, with start-end increasing by 24% on average**

Rochdale AFC Community Trust

I am safe and supported at home, at school, and in the community

Whilst our SEND-specific sessions focus on social and physical engagement, we have a plethora of community activities to signpost to, to ensure young people are supported holistically.

We strive to ensure that our local community are aware of our wide-ranging community projects. It's not just football; we operate the Dale Food Pantry to ensure that no one goes hungry, we run HAF holiday programmes, deliver employability and mental wellbeing support, and offer a range of education courses from school-based education and Alternative Provision, to adult education and skill building.

All of our staff are DBS checked and undertake a minimum of two external safeguarding courses annually alongside additional training, and at least one trained Mental Health First Aider is present at every SEND session.

I feel like these sessions are for people like me



"My daughter was immediately made to feel very welcome and has after only a few sessions made friends and embraced all the activities.

She often struggles in social situations and is currently undergoing assessments for autism.

Dale Geeks has given her a place where she can be herself and be comfortable - a very special group of people."





of parents said **"I would feel comfortable asking staff for more information on employability programmes, food initiatives, free activities, and mental wellbeing support"**

"I really enjoy coming here and invite others if they are interested in D and D"



Rochdale AFC Community Trust

I am active and involved

It's important to us that young people have a choice of sessions to attend, and that their voice matters within those sessions, guiding activities.

We pride ourselves on giving young people opportunities to make friends, learn new skills, help others, have fun, and most importantly, feel included.

We surveyed all of the children and young people taking part in our football, multisport, and Dale Geeks sessions, to find out to what extent they felt they were active and involved. We found:

I feel like these sessions are for people like me

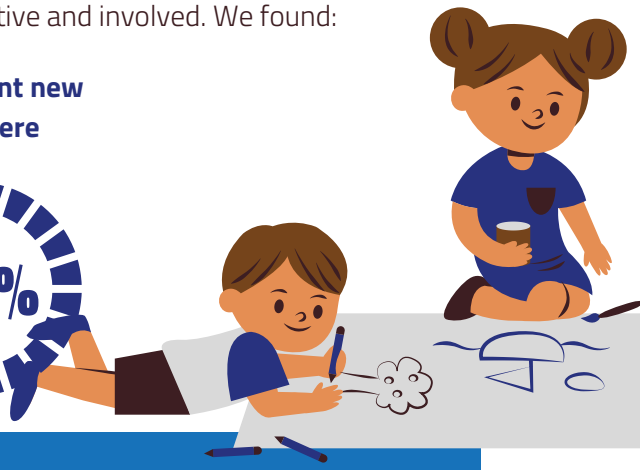
92%

I have made new friends here

96%

I have learnt new skills here

96%



You may know Blaine for being the winner of 'Sports Young Achiever of the Year' at the Rochdale Borough Sports Awards in 2022 - an incredible achievement! But it hasn't been easy for Blaine - he's challenged himself, pushed boundaries, proved people wrong, and is now reaping the rewards.

We first met Blaine in January 2022, aged 22, when he enrolled on our 10-week Traineeship programme.

Although Blaine had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place, he had been economically inactive since leaving full time education. Having very complex needs, cochlear implants, diagnosed autism and significant learning difficulties, the prospect of seeking employment was a daunting one.

Lockdown created further isolation for Blaine, leaving him feeling unfulfilled with little aspiration for the future.

However, during the 10-week programme Blaine was supported to gain an Award in Customer Service and Business Administration, and developed a real passion for football, playing for our Rochdale AFC Ability Counts Team.

Blaine has turned his life around, gaining employment and playing football on a weekly basis, with new found friends and reaping the rewards of increased physical activity and a healthier lifestyle: the man we all know today, Blaine, Rochdale's Sports Young Achiever of the Year.



Rochdale AFC Community Trust

I am hopeful and prepared for the future

We strive to ensure that whilst children and young people are with us, we're aiming to develop the whole person. We offer a range of workshops, courses and activities to allow young people to build confidence, develop life skills, and ensure young people are empowered to make choices about things that affect them.



We surveyed all of the children and young people taking part in our football, multisport, and Dale Geeks sessions, to find out whether they feel like they have become more confident since coming here. We found:

I feel like I have become more confident since coming here

96%

19

young people with SEND have taken part in our Traineeships

11

young people with SEND have taken part in social action projects

"Volunteering changed my life"

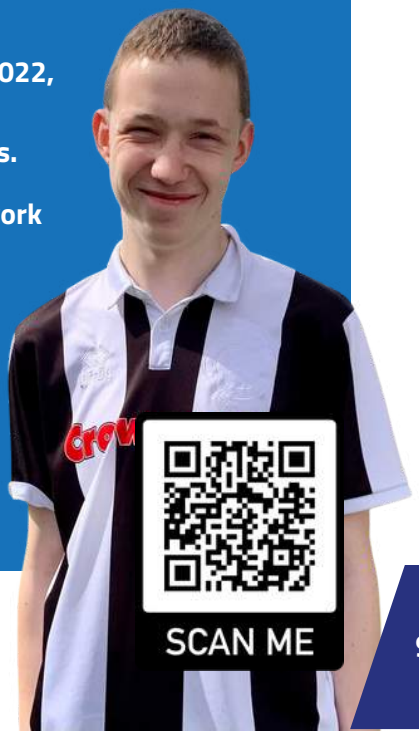
We'd like to introduce Nathan.

18-year-old Nathan lives with learning disabilities and autism, but he doesn't let that stop him. A lifelong Rochdale fan, boasting a season ticket since the age of 9, it was Nathan's dream to be involved with the Club.

Nathan began attending our pan-disability football sessions in April 2022, and soon took up a Volunteer role at our inclusive multisport session each week, acting as a positive role model for children with disabilities.

Nathan said "I love the Football Club, I have my whole life. I want to work with children and support them as much as I can, so volunteering was the perfect thing for me. It's a breath of fresh air to be able to try something new – fighting against that thing that tells you to stick to what you know, being yourself and trying new things, pushing yourself and building new skills."

Following a year of volunteering, Nathan was thrilled to be offered an Apprenticeship with Rochdale AFC Community Trust!



Rochdale AFC Community Trust

Those that care for me are supported

It's important to us that parents, carers, and siblings also feel supported by us whilst they're with us, and that they are able to access support for themselves and the child that they care for outside of the session.

We have a brilliant network of supportive parents and knowledgeable staff, who aside from session delivery for the children, all aim to help, advise, guide and empower each other to ensure the best outcomes for our Rochdale children.

This support and guidance ranges from discussing the best Primary and Secondary Schools to suit children's needs, finding additional activities, sharing knowledge and even practical support to access the support and benefits they're entitled to, and generally sharing experiences to support each other.

100%

of parents said **"I feel like I can talk to staff about concerns, and ask for advice where needed"**

34

children and young people with SEND and their siblings take part in a physical activity session together

"These sessions have been a lifesaver for us. Not just for the football, but also giving us the opportunity to meet people who understand how hard it can be sometimes, and we can support each other"

