COMMUNITIES ADDRESSING GAMBLING HARMS

Rochdale AFC
Community Trust

ROCHDALE A.F.C.
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THE DALE

2022

Rochdale AFC Community Trust: The official Charity of Rochdale AFC

Who are we, and what does our organisation do?

We are an independent charity operating as the community arm of Rochdale AFC. We deliver an increasingly diverse range of community-focused projects around our key areas of work – sport, education & employability, and health & inclusion.

We use the power of sport and football in particular as an engagement tool to drive positive social change and outcomes. We work with people of all ages and backgrounds, from 2 to 92 and focus much of our work on supporting areas of high deprivation.

Rochdale AFC Community Trust

@RAFCCommunity

@rochdaleafccommunity

www.rochdaleafccommunity.org

Context

What was the problem that our project sought to address?

In late 2021, Rochdale AFC Community Trust received a grant of £26,200 to deliver our mental wellbeing and gambling harms provision.

The prevalence of gambling sponsors on football shirts is rife, however Rochdale AFC are one of few who are proud not to have this association. This therefore leaves us in a strong position to drive engagement on this project, with an initial talking point around football already there.

There is a link between mental wellbeing and gambling, specifically, confidence, resilience, and the impact of peer pressure - therefore, we sought to educate and empower to reduce the risk of gambling in our community.



Building Blocks

What did we need to get started?

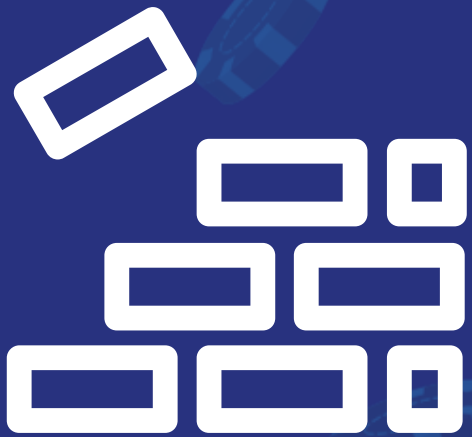
To ensure the projects success, we sought to employ a full time Mental Wellbeing Officer to deliver our aims.

Following numerous applications and a round of interviews, Chloe Meade started with us on 4th January 2022, having recently graduated from University with a Masters in Sport Psychology.

Upon starting the role, Chloe embarked on her Mental Health First Aid course, and several members of the team undertook the Gaming and Gambling Awareness Education Programme, delivered by the Young Gamers and Gamblers Education Trust (YGAM).







Our Project

How did we plan to address this need?

We sought to focus our engagement on those who are most vulnerable and at-risk of gambling harm within Rochdale, including:

- Children and young people
- Children, young people and adults from ethnic minority backgrounds
- People living in areas of high deprivation
- Unemployed adults
- People struggling with their mental health
- Armed forces veterans

We sought to deliver a blended learning approach:

- Workshops in schools, youth clubs and sports clubs
- Targeted workshops working with specific population groups
- Direct support for both those at risk of gambling harm and also their family/ friends/ carers
- All participants will be encouraged to access our mental wellbeing programmes



Schools' Mental Wellbeing Programme

Improving the mental wellbeing of Primary School-aged children

The programme was designed for classes in KS2, and took place over one hour per week for 6 weeks; delivered through fun and interactive activities. The programme culminated in a final week project to showcase, through whatever medium they chose, what they had learnt to the rest of the School.



What impact did the programme have?

317

Pupils took part in the 6-week programme

> I enjoyed the resillience games teaching me not to give up

82%

of children stated that they could recognise their own emotions after the programme

71%

of children said they know how to make themselves feel better when they're feeling low



Schools' Mental Wellbeing Programme

Improving the mental wellbeing of Secondary School-aged children

"It helps to express your feelings without people judging you and it helped me with my confidence"

Following the success of our Primary Schools' Mental Wellbeing Programme, we sought to pilot a Secondary Schools' Mental Wellbeing Programme.

Initially, with St Anne's Academy taking part in a 10-week programme with 45 students; followed by 15 students from Falinge Park High School taking part in a 5-week pilot.

Having evaluated and learned from the 10-week pilot, we decided to pilot a shorter, 5-week programme and together with the School considered group dynamics when selecting students.



What impact did the programme have?

244%

Increase in students who understand what mental wellbeing is

TEN FOLD

Increase in students who knew strategies to develop resilience

14/15

Students knew how to improve their confidence

3x

More students knew how to identify and reframe negative thoughts

FULL EVALUATION

10-week (45 students)

SCAN ME

5-week (15 students)

SCAN ME

Challenges

What barriers/challenges did we face?

Our first challenge was the realisation that the community largely didn't see gambling as a public health issue, and thus it was difficult to engage people with many people predominantly associating casinos with gambling. For our team, the education received through the YGAM course provided plenty of examples of other forms of gambling including many forms linked to football, and the prevelance of sponsorship and advertising. Perhaps the most useful thing we learnt from this workshop for our target audience, was the relationship between gaming and gambling and how, when you consider the definition of gambling as "paying for something and not knowing the outcome" things like player packs and loot boxes also fall under this definition. Having learned this, and being able to pass this knowledge on to young people in our community, not only provided a talking point to engage but also made many young people consider their activity when gaming, with many realising that they had unknowingly been gambling.

Furthermore, we found it somewhat tricky to approach the topic with ethnically diverse communities, as gambling is classed as haram (forbidden) in Islam. However, we found that combining the workshop with football tournaments and incorporating gaming was an effective way to engage.

Enablers

What enabled/helped us deliver our project?

To overcome any barriers, we sought to do things differently.

Our Schools Mental Wellbeing Programmes allowed us to reach 379 young people with the provision of 5 - 10 week programmes, tackling many of the risk factors preceding gambling addictions including low confidence, self esteem, and peer pressure. We believe that tackling the risk factors rather than gambling directly, aided with our engagement with both schools and young people - as the vast majority now recognise the importance of learning about mental wellbeing, but many do not yet see gambling as a public health issue, rather just a financial issue.

Additionally, we found our position as a Football Club Community Charity greatly enhanced our ability to engage, as we have a base of people who know and trust us. This provided several groups of people willing to engage in one-off workshops, including older people, military veterans, and unemployed adults through employability programmes.

Learning

What did we learn? If we were to run the same project again, what would we do differently?

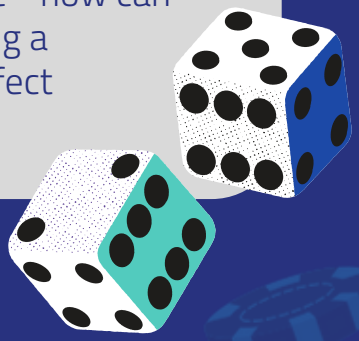
Our greatest learnings on the project relate to how information is portrayed.

We firmly believe that our successful engagement with schools, leading to fantastic outcomes for our young people - improving confidence, self esteem, and resillience - all reducing the risk of engaging in gambling, was at least in part due to not approaching Schools with a gambling-related programme.

Furthermore, a key success of our community engagement was through football tournaments, though we did discover this late on in the project lifecycle.

Takeaways for future projects:

1. Consider the advertising approach - is a 'gambling-fronted' programme likely to achieve the desired engagement with the target audience?
2. Rather than simply asking people to sign up to a programme or workshop, consider where your target audience already are - how can you use that to your advantage to reach them? Sandwiching a workshop in the middle of a football tournament is the perfect example!



Sustainability

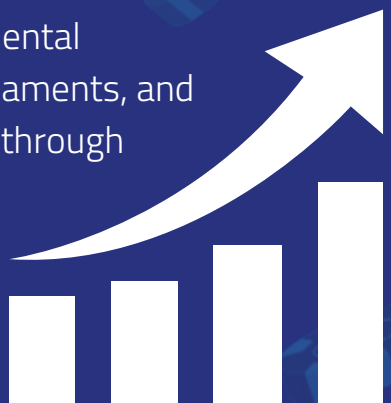
Do we have any plans to continue the project in any form?

Due to the projects success, we have developed ways of ensuring it continues beyond the funding period.

Primary Schools' Mental Wellbeing Programme
This programme has now transitioned into our Premier League Primary Stars offer, with 12 x 6-week blocks available free of charge to local Schools in 2023.

Secondary Schools' Mental Wellbeing Programme
This programme has now transitioned to a paid model, ensuring local schools are still able to access the offer for their students with low confidence and self-esteem.

Community-based provision
We will continue to integrate the topics of gambling and mental wellbeing in our youth programmes through football tournaments, and we will continue to offer information, advice and guidance through the Dale Food Pantry and our Welfare Advice service.



Community of Practice

What are our reflections on the Community of Practice?

We found the Community of Practice to be useful, as it gave everyone the opportunity to meet other organisations working in the same field, and everyone's project was different.

This provided some great opportunities for working together, sharing opportunities, and learning from each other.

For example, 4 of our team attended the 'Against the Odds' workshop hosted by Healthy Stadia. Furthermore, having knowledge of other local projects allows for effective signposting; our project didn't directly offer supportfor those who were needing more intense support for gambling, however the Community of Practice allowed us to meet other organisations who could offer that support, which provided an opportunity to refer.





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