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Always a Chance Charity

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Northampton Saints Foundation Update

I do hope you are all keeping well? I thought it would be timely to provide you with an update on our work, as a charity, as we have grown so much over the past 12 – 18 months, and so I've included an update on the scope of all our work, but with particular emphasis on updating you on our Social Inclusion work, which is going from strength to strength.

Our core purpose as you know, is to use the values of rugby both on and off the pitch to support young people. – teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline and sportsmanship and the power of sport is used to, Inspire, Support, and Educate young people and their communities.

Our four core areas remain, Education, Heritage, Fundraising and Social Inclusion.

Our **Education** work continues to link with local schools across Northamptonshire, and we are delighted that this work has continued, despite the Covid pandemic, with 2130 primary school students experiencing programmes covering social, emotional, and physical wellbeing and numeracy during the last academic year. With the latest lockdown in January 2021, we quickly took the decision to develop and deliver an online learning provision to local schools, based on our Tackling Health, Character and Numeracy programmes. This was a resounding success, relieving pressure from schoolteachers by providing a ready-to-go lesson plan, and essential exercises to get students active, (supported by endurance World Record Holder, and friend of the Foundation Jack Fleckney, who has recorded a number of exercise sessions for us). The sessions ran in the January – February term for both current and new school partners, with each lasting for 45 minutes, and were provided free for schools.

Our Hitz Programme, and Engage+ programme, both supporting students aged 16+ now both sit within our 'Education' area. Both continue to thrive, with 21 students completing their Hitz course with us this year, and a further 26 students from Northampton college on our Engage+ programme.

Our Values programme, also sits in this area, and has grown significantly in its delivery over the past 12 months, and is now delivered across 3 sites in Coventry, supporting 35 students who have been referred into Pupil Referral units, the main aims of this programme are to reintegrate these students back to mainstream education. We have also recently made contact with the Chief inspector at West Midlands Police and are due to be visiting after half-term to discuss our work in Coventry.



Our **Heritage** project researching the Mobbs Own Battalion completed late in 2020 and the outcomes are now permanently recorded for anyone to view via our website, alongside a Mobbs Own Brochure, which has been widely distributed across Northamptonshire and beyond, as well as over 700 school children experiencing our Mobbs Own History day. We are planning further projects to document the rich history of the Northampton Saints Rugby Club in the future.

Our **Fundraising** department was significantly affected by the pandemic, with our inability to raise fund on matchdays, and continue with various planned activities including the abseil which should have taken place in July 2020. We quickly moved our focus from events fundraising to increasing our grants and online fundraising and were successful in securing sufficient funding to keep the Foundation moving forward into 2021. We are now planning our way out of lockdown, with future events, and hope to be able to complete our Abseil, with 10 participants in May. We are also planning a Foundation Day in April, encouraging people through our and the clubs social media following to join our Friend of the Foundation scheme, (regular giving scheme), and also have 'An Evening with our Ambassadors', scheduled to take place online in May. Annually we aim to raise more than £200,000 from fundraising and grants to maintain our service levels.

Our **Social Inclusion Engage Programme** aims to support students to gain confidence in themselves by providing positive support networks around them. It focusses on improving their ability to integrate effectively with their peer groups and importantly within their communities, creating a bespoke positive pathway for the young person to create a successful future. The referrals to the Engage programme come from a range of departments within the Education, Social Care and Police arena, including Special Educational Needs, Education & Inclusion, Social Workers, Police Community Initiative to Reduce Violence, CAHMS and the NHS. We work in partnership with our students and their families/carers enabling individuals to reach their potential. A consistent approach is adopted, as this encourages the young person to bring structure into their life, enabling them to feel comfortable and able to fully participate in the programmes.

“without the support of the Foundation, I dread to think where I would be. I completely shutdown from all support networks, but they gave me confidence in my own ability”

Amy - age 17 joined us at 15, after not being engaged in mainstream education, Amy would abscond from school.

We helped her to get the support she needed, including Mental Health, Drug Counselling, and local professional support.

Her confidence has grown since being with the Foundation.

She completed qualifications in Level 1 Sports, Entry 3 in English and Maths and is continuing her academic work with us completing an Employability qualification.

She has secured a part time job, something which she had not thought possible when she joined us.



In addition to educational attainment, all our programmes include advice on the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle. We incorporate exercise sessions and healthy eating advice. Advising on these subjects goes a long way in supporting the young people, bringing a number of benefits around general health, mental wellbeing, self-esteem and concentration. Sex education and the importance of healthy relationships are also covered.

Our **Social Inclusion** programmes have seen the biggest impact since the start of the pandemic, with a move to online learning for our older students, when necessary, whilst our centre remained open to support vulnerable young people. The demand for the places on these programmes has grown exponentially since the start of the pandemic.

Referrals have increased over the past year linked to the Covid pandemic as disadvantaged young people have become more marginalised and vulnerable. From September to January 2019/20 we delivered 805 sessions, whereas we delivered 1173 sessions in the same period 2020/21. In total in 2019/20, we supported 201 students in our social inclusion's programmes, with 90% of these students returning to education, training, or employment.

This increase in demand is a sad reflection of the negative impact that the Covid pandemic has had on our young people. Many were struggling in mainstream before the pandemic, and they have simply found this additional stress too much, the increased isolation faced by many over the summer, autumn and winter lockdowns, has led to many more vulnerable young children needing support. We are determined to do all we can to support all these young people's education, social wellbeing, and life chances.

We now have 4 Engage Hubs, our original Engage programme moved to Old Northamptonians Rugby Club last year and continues to deliver amazing results for the students. We have since opened a second and third hub at Franklins Gardens and at Top Jump in Milton Keynes. (see attached case study from 1 of our students in Milton Keynes, as you can see, we are already making a difference in this new area). The success of our Engage programme, also led us to be invited by the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner to open a 4th hub in Ipswich, which we are currently planning, and will be open for students from September 2021.

We thank you for your continuing support of our work, and continued funding, and we very much look forward to seeing you back at the Foundation, when Covid allows.

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