



Operation Onside – Premier League Partnership Project



Project ADDER, NE BCU Child Exploitation Team & the West Ham United Foundation

Police Sergeant Ian Ness & Detective Sergeant Joshua Palmer



METROPOLITAN
POLICE

MORE
TRUST

LESS
CRIME

HIGH
STANDARDS

Introduction

In December 2024 North East BCU in the MPS were approached by the West Ham United Foundation (WHUF) with the opportunity to explore procuring funding from the Premier League Foundation for grants of between £10,000 - £30,000 provided these were match funded by the MPS. This funding offer was for a variety of delivery methods from the provision of one-to-one mentoring to young persons referred into the programme to group sessions at partner clubs, or to fund referrals into the existing Premier League Kicks Programme.

Following consultation with WHUF regarding how this diversionary pilot project would cater for at risk children on the BCU, Project Adder and NE BCU committed £10,000 to the creation of a bespoke pilot project. WHUF then submitted a bid to the Premier League Foundation and match funding was subsequently agreed providing a total of £20,000 for the project on NE BCU.



Community Need

North East BCU is made up of the London Boroughs of Newham & Waltham Forest. Newham is one of the most diverse boroughs in the country, with a high level of poverty, which presents unique policing challenges and a corresponding lack of opportunity for some within our communities. One of the main drivers for serious youth and weapon enabled violence is drug related criminality, whether that be via the suppliers and their exploitation of the young and vulnerable, or drug users committing acquisitive crime, both of which are factors which have a devastating impact on our communities.

Organisational Requirements

At a time of tough choices whereby the MPS is refocusing its funding on crime fighting initiatives, it is imperative that projects which do not have a direct crime fighting focus are both data led and value for money. It was with this understanding that NE BCU embarked on this pilot project, now known corporately as Operation Onside.

Target Audience & Referral Process -

The initial target audience for participants was children of secondary school age who were in the 13 – 18 age bracket and;

- Who were identified as being vulnerable to harm as a result of having come to notice as a victim of crime.
- Who were identified as being vulnerable to harm as a result of having come to notice as a suspect in a crime.
- Who were identified as being vulnerable to harm as a result of experiencing missing episodes.

NE BCU Child Exploitation Team (CET) owned and managed the referral process as risk assessor and gatekeeper, as it is a unit responsible for managing risk and harm to and from the most vulnerable young persons on the BCU. The referrals were then sent to the WHUF Safeguarding Lead for ratification and acceptance into the pilot. The referral process sought to balance;

- The benefit to the individual young person.
- The benefit weighed against the desired harmony of the cohort as a whole.
- Risk posed to the young person in the community.
- The capacity of a young person to cause harm to other members of the cohort

The West Ham United Foundation



The Project Delivery & Session Structure

Sessions ran from 17/07/2025 – 30/10/2025 and were held at ‘The Foundry’, the home of the West Ham United Foundation which was redeveloped in 2025. The site consists of football pitches, event spaces, meeting rooms and a community centre with adjoining café & catering space. The project consisted of:

- An 18 Week programme designed to cater to a cohort of 30 children, covering the summer holidays and the first academic term to reduce “lost hours” and vulnerability.
- Project control was maintained by weekly GRIP meetings between the MPS, WHUF and partners to plan sessions, review participants and enable rapid decision making and problem solving.

A single two-hour session was delivered each week by UEFA accredited WHUF coaches, Police Officers and external speakers which consisted of:

- 1-hour football activity & 1-hour workshop with topics agreed between partners prior to sessions.
- A hot meal and refreshments for participants.
- Incentives – participants attending 3+ sessions received WHU branded apparel to encourage a sense of pride and belonging to the cohort.

Measuring Success – Impacts & Outcomes

All young persons referred had prior police engagement or safeguarding concerns that had been flagged to Police by PRUs or the local authority. The majority of the cohort were referred by police and had come to notice as victims, suspects, or vulnerable individuals.

For each child, the number of times they came to police notice (CTN) was aggregated for:

- 6 months pre project participation & 6 months following project commencement

Key Statistics:

- **42 children** referred into the pilot
- **20 children** attended at least one session with most of these attending multiple sessions over lifetime of the project
- Overall average decrease in children coming to police notice: **90%**
- For participants attending **3+ sessions**, the average decrease in coming to police notice decreased by **86%**

Measuring Success – Impacts & Outcomes

Child Details	Child Age	Child Ethnicity	Child Gender	Instances of CTN Jan 25 – May 25	Instances of CTN Jun 25 – Nov 25	Percentage Increase/Decrease
Child 2	17	IC3	Male	5	0	-100%
Child 3	16	IC3	Male	3	0	-100%
Child 4	14	IC3	Male	2	0	-100%
Child 6	16	IC4	Male	3	0	-100%
Child 7	17	IC3	Male	4	0	-100%
Child 10	17	IC3	Male	2	0	-100%
Child 12	15	IC3	Male	1	0	-100%
Child 13	14	IC3	Male	7	0	-100%
Child 14	14	IC4	Male	2	0	-100%
Child 15	16	IC1	Male	2	0	-100%
Child 19	12	IC3	Male	4	0	-100%
Child 20	15	IC4	Male	1	0	-100%
Child 9	16	IC3	Male	3	1	-66.67%
Child 5	15	IC3	Male	12	6	-50%
Child 8	15	IC1	Male	3	2	-33.33%
Child 16	13	IC3	Male	0	0	0%
Child 17	14	IC3	Male	0	0	0%
Child 11	16	IC3	Male	2	4	100%
Child 18	13	IC3	Male	0	1	100%
Child 1	16	IC3	Male	6	23	283%

Case Studies

Child 3 – 16-year-old male

Child 3 came to police notice after being arrested with Class A drugs working on a county line. He was the victim of a kidnap whereby he was taken to Birmingham and exploited there to commit further criminality. At the time of referral into the pilot, he was not in education or employment. He was referred to NE BCU CET and engaged with over a period of several months. CET officers facilitated a move outside of London and provided support for Child 3 whilst living outside of London. Child 3 was referred and accepted into the pilot and provided support, especially around career development and CV building. He now has a full-time job working in removals and has ambitions to work in finance. As a result of positive engagement with police, Child 3 had the confidence to report historic child abuse against a family member to police officers facilitating the project, resulting in a criminal investigation against an estranged family member.

Case Studies

Child 10 – 17-year-old male

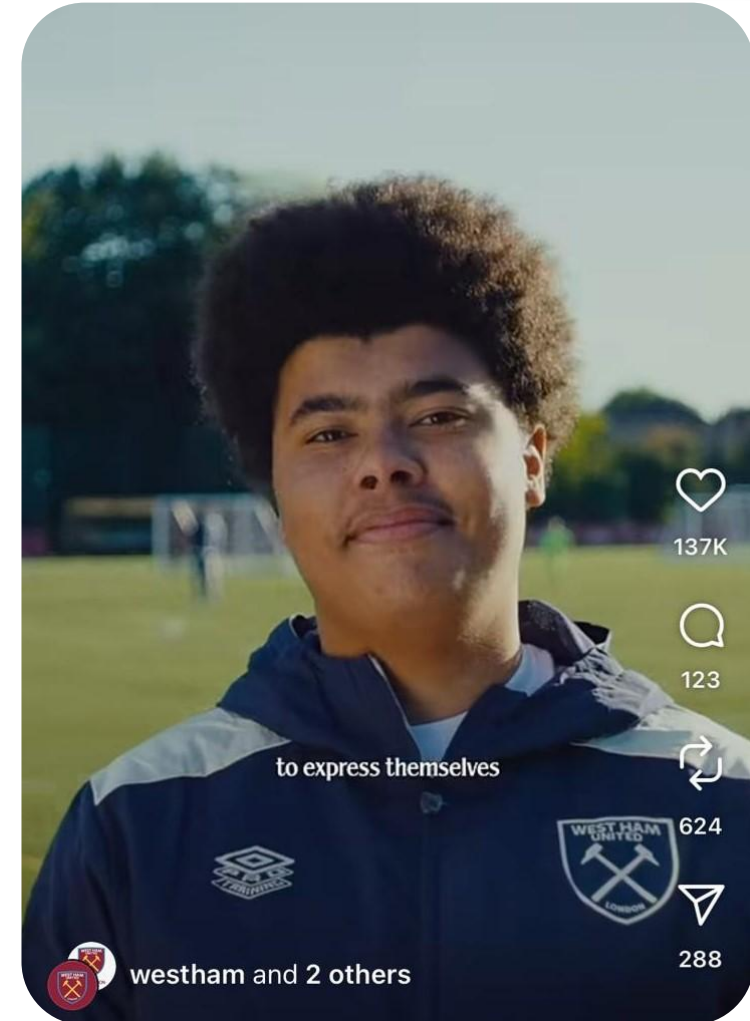
Child 10 was exploited into committing vehicle crime by an Organised Crime Network and was arrested twice as a result. He was also the victim of a serious GBH as a result of engaging in this criminality. At the time of referral into the project, Child 10 was not in education or employment. Child 10 was opened to NE CET and engaged with over a period of several months prior to being referred into the project during which police facilitated a housing move for Child 10 and their family to remove them from an area of harm. Child 10 was a regular participant at the project and successfully completed programme. He has since gone onto return to education and sit his GCSEs. He not come to police notice since he entered the project and has since been employed by the West Ham United Foundation.

Looking Ahead

- The Op Onside delivery model is to be upscaled and rolled out again this Spring/Summer and aims to cater to approximately 70 at risk children across three BCUs.
- Two further sites in addition to the NE Project Adder area within the MPS are set to implement this delivery model with their respective football clubs, Arsenal and Crystal Palace.
- A toolkit has been created and will be provided to police and partners to ensure smooth implementation of the model at other sites.
- Further analysis and expansion of the Op Onside model to areas outside of London.

London Borough of Newham Council & the MPS

- To ensure sustained safeguarding outcomes for participants, the Op Onside team intend to work closely with the local authority to provide a full safeguarding wraparound for participants both pre and post project.
- The Op Onside Team will work with LBN to ensure that participant details are shared with the local authority so that enhanced safeguarding provisions and offers can be made to children referred into the programme.
- Post participation protocols to be agreed with the local authority to mitigate risk of backslide for vulnerable children and to ensure sustained positive outcomes.





Questions?