



# Sport In Mind

2025



**Transforming  
young people's  
mental health  
through sport and  
physical activity**

| Youth Impact Report

Registered Charity 1161323

## Our mission

Sport in Mind is the country's leading mental health sports charity. Our mission is:

**To improve the lives of children, young people and adults experiencing mental health challenges through sport and physical activity.**

Sport in Mind's Queen's Award-winning programmes use the power of sport to save lives and transform the futures of children, young people and adults struggling with their mental health. As a charity, Sport in Mind delivers inclusive physical activity groups, and interactive educational workshops in order to promote mental wellbeing, improve physical health, challenge stigma, build resilience, aid recovery, combat social isolation and empower people to move their lives forward in a positive direction.

Every Sport in Mind programme is delivered hand-in-hand with the NHS, blending clinical insight with real-world experience. Each initiative is codesigned by individuals with lived experience of mental health problems, ensuring that every session is relevant, effective, and truly life-changing. This collaborative approach guarantees that services directly address the unique needs of beneficiaries, placing their voices and experiences at the very heart of the charity's mission.



Formed in 2010 by Neil Harris, Sport in Mind emerged from a deeply personal place - a bespoke programme created to support a childhood friend's recovery. From this single act of kindness, Sport in Mind has grown to support the recovery of thousands of children, young people and adults. The charity has become a beacon for innovative and hope, providing person-centred mental health support rooted in the power of activity and community. Sport in Mind's work has gained both widespread national and international acclaim.

**Neil Harris**  
CEO, Sport In Mind



“

While statistics may seem overwhelming, witnessing the transformative impact Sport in Mind's services have on beneficiaries is truly inspiring. If you are inspired by the stories and impact that our work has, I hope you choose to join us in our mission. **Together, we can build a healthier and happier future for our beneficiaries!"**



## Why are we here?

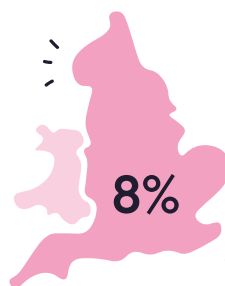
# Children and young people: The UK's mental health crisis

**1 in 5** young people have a probable mental health problem. This is up from 1 in 9 in 2017.

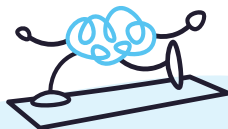


New **urgent referrals** to crisis care teams for under 18s each month have **more than tripled** since 2019.

At the end of July 2025, there were over **half a million** referrals to CYPMHS where young people **were still waiting** to start treatment. Half of these young people had been waiting over a year.



of all children in England have an active referral to children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS).



The last 12 months

## We've saved lives, and transformed thousands of children's mental health:

Sport in Mind supported children across London, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Greater Manchester, Northamptonshire, Hampshire, Warwickshire and Sussex.

We have used sport to educate and support the recovery of

6,552

children and young people.



Through interactive workshops and assemblies, we educated **5,698** school children about mental health and resilience in over **40** schools.

Through our weekly youth community sessions, we supported the recovery of **854** young people struggling with their mental health.



**72%**

of children and young people agreed that their mental wellbeing had improved since attending sessions.



91%

agreed that they were more likely to be active outside of Sport in Mind sessions after attending.



## Youth journals

- Vibrant, jam-packed, interactive journals.
- Includes a range of different activities linked to areas of well-being.
- Provides an opportunity for young people to take care of their physical and mental health through a range of activities.
- Encourages individual expression and proactive ways to manage emotions.
- Designed to help reduce worry and anxiety and focus on what works well.

“

"[I learnt] that it's ok to feel sad and not always do you have to be happy and you can try out new exercise and it has a daily mood tracker."

"[I learnt] that mental health is just as important as physical health and you should take care of both equally"

"I have learnt that mental health is really important and should be looked after."





92%

of children and young people **had fun** using the journal.

76%

felt they **benefited** from using the journal.

86%

now **recognise the benefits** of being physically **active** for their mental health.

79%

of young people said it **helped them get more active**.

88%

of young people rated the journal as being **accessible** for their needs.

65%

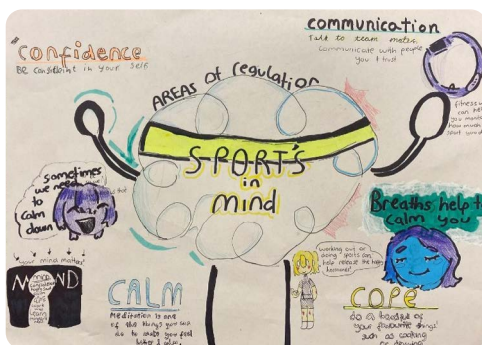
of young people said they **better understood themselves** having used the journal.

91%

are keen to have ongoing use of the Sport in Mind Journal.

100%

of teachers said they would use the Sport in Mind journals again for their pupils



Student worksheets

“

Doing useful things before sleep like reading makes you sleep better and also being active and being healthy is good."




"I learnt different ways to stay fit and keep exercising"

"I learnt to stay healthy and it made me calm"

”

# Pupil workshop feedback

Thanks For that,  
I found that very  
helpful and clever.  
Thank you 

very fun  
helped me after  
a stressful lesson  
Thank you  
!!

I struggle with anxiety,  
so I already know  
lots of breathing but  
this session has still  
been very helpful. ~~the~~  
Thank you


I felt it was helpful as I struggle  
in day to day life with anxiety.  
It was amazing.



thank you for spending  
time with us. I enjoyed  
the spot that you gave  
us. it has inspired me to  
do spot art in the ~~area~~  
future  
sports in mind



Thank you for saving your  
time and teaching us about  
Sport in mind. I enjoyed the  
beanbag and ball game. It has  
inspired me to play some more  
sports in the future



## Case studies

### Wokingham youth sessions

- Out of all attendees:
  - 25% had anxiety/depression
  - 20% had low confidence/self-esteem
  - 15% isolation
  - 10% low mood
- **69** sessions delivered
- **44** participants
- **678** attendances
- **100** youth journals distributed



It helped me to be myself and express myself."

"I loved it! It gave me so many strategies and made me happy."

"The breathing exercise helped me to calm down."

"A fun way to get out of the house."

"[It was] relaxing and interesting."

"I can't sleep so what I am going to do now is some belly breathing to help."



94%

of students said the workshop helped them understand what good mental health looks like.

96%

of students said they enjoyed the workshop activities.

94%

said they'd like Sport in Mind to visit their school again in the future.



100%

of teachers said they'd recommend Sport in Mind workshops to other schools.

There is several reasons why I love Sport in Mind so much.

I like the variety of games we play on each session such as badminton, basketball, ping pong and dodgeball.

**The sessions make me very happy and relaxed** when I'm there.

I always laugh with the teachers and have made good friends with the other children.

**Every week I can't wait to go** and see my new friends and have fun together.

Thanks to Sport in Mind, I have made new friends from different backgrounds and age groups and helped build my confidence. I never feel shy now and this is why I love Sport in Mind. **Oh and it's really, really, FUN!!!**

- Sport in Mind youth participant



## Case studies

### James Elliman Academy: 5-week programme

The programme targeted pupils identified as struggling with emotional regulation and mental wellbeing. The initiative was aiming to fill a gap in local provision by using sport as a tool for mental health support.

Rob Ellington, PE Lead, described the programme as **"the best I've ever seen linking sport and mental health."**

#### Key outcomes included:

- Students expressing excitement and preference for SiM sessions over regular PE.
- Improved emotional regulation, with one student using SiM techniques to self-calm rather than hide or flee.
- Enhanced memory and learning retention in students typically struggling with recall.
- Observable long-term progress in behaviour and classroom engagement.



He's really benefitting from his weekly sessions and his self-confidence is growing. It's a bonus that he gets to work on his social skills too."



When she first attended Sport in Mind she was nervous and apprehensive – asking her mum not to leave her and becoming anxious when this was proposed. Clinging to her mum at the start of the session, Sport in Mind's coach enquired what her favourite sport was to which she reluctantly replied, "tennis". The Sport in Mind coach, asked her if she'd like to get some tennis equipment out, and she agreed. She quickly began to get involved in the session and built a strong connection between the coach and volunteers.

Since joining Sport in Mind several months ago, she's attended all sessions, playing multiple different sports and has grown in confidence greatly. Despite her initial anxiety and shyness, she has integrated herself fantastically with other children at the session and is no longer apprehensive about entering the sessions or getting involved anymore.



RAISE YOUR GAME

CONTINENTAL



sportinmind.org

**Make an impact**

## You can change lives through sport

Your support will deliver life-changing sessions that boost the confidence, resilience, and wellbeing of a child or young person.

Together, we can ensure no young person faces mental health challenges alone.

**Did you know?**

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**£5,000**

funds one weekly youth community session for a year and ten workshops.

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**£20,000**

funds five weekly sessions for a **whole year**.

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**£100,000**

**would change everything** - from funding an entire region for a year, or even helping us expand into new areas of the UK.

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**Donate now at [sportinmind.org](https://sportinmind.org)**

or scan the QR code.







We're on  
**your** side





**Thank you** to all our amazing supporters for enabling us to save and transform the lives of so many children and young people over the last 12 months.

A special Sport in Mind mention goes to our fabulous friends who made this all happen:

**The Paul Crocombe Legacy**

**David & Ruth Lewis Family Charitable Trust**

**Bushby Legacy**

**Alexander Mosley Charitable Trust**

**Wokingham Borough Council**



Registered with  
**FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR**



### **Sport In Mind**

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Sport In Mind is a charity registered in England and Wales.  
Registered charity number 1161323.