THE ARSENAL IN THE COMMUNITY STORY

ARSENA FOOTBALL CLUB, PART OF ITS COMMUNITY SINCE 1886
Nick Hornby making an impression at TreeHouse during its charity partnership with Arsenal in 2007.
Community has always been at the heart of Arsenal Football Club. What makes a club survive in the long-term is not always the top of the tree but its roots. It is these roots that we need to extend and make sure that they grow and spread into the community, both here in the UK and internationally. It is a fundamental part of what we do and what we represent as a club.

We know the unique connection that Arsenal has with its community enables us to reach out to many in society in a way that few organisations can. Through our fantastic Arsenal in the Community team, and The Arsenal Foundation, we make the most of this privilege – working across north London and beyond to help young people thrive.

ARSÈNE WENGER
Arsenal Foundation Ambassador
Hector Bellerin visits Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School in Islington.
THE STORY SO FAR

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Arsenal Football Club has always understood the power it has to bring people together and make a difference in the community.

Back when the club was formed in 1886, matchday programme cards were sold to raise money for Homes for Working Boys at the club’s former home in Woolwich, south London. When Arsenal arrived in Islington in 1913, one of the club’s first gestures was a gift of one thousand guineas to the Great Northern Hospital for the endowment of a new bed.

As the club has grown over the years, so has our ability to make a difference. In 1985, we became one of the first clubs in the country to set up a dedicated community team. This was done in response to the social unrest on London estates at that time.

Our managing director Ken Friar brought me in to run the team, alongside Vic Akers.
Through the programmes that we have developed since, I am proud to say we have made a real, positive impact on the lives of many young people. Of course, we have not been able to do this alone, and we work with a great number of organisations. Their dedication and support have made much of the work possible.

Arsenal’s tradition of giving has also expanded over the years, from making contributions to projects and organisations local to the club, to the Arsenal Charitable Trust which was established in 1991. In 2004, we launched a Charity of the Season initiative which saw ChildLine, the David Rocastle Trust, the Willow Foundation, Treehouse, Teenage Cancer Trust, Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity and Centrepoint all benefit.

The Arsenal Foundation was launched in May 2012 as a grant giving organisation with the mission to help young people locally and around the world fulfil their potential. Save the Children, the Willow Foundation and Islington Giving are all official partners of the Foundation, with a great number of other projects also benefitting from grants and support.

The Arsenal motto is “Forward” and looking to the future, we believe we can grow the reach and scope of our work in the community still further.

The Arsenal in the Community team have a fantastic new home – the Arsenal Hub – by Emirates Stadium, which will help us inspire more young people than ever before. Thanks to the generosity of supporters, players and staff, The Arsenal Foundation also grows from strength to strength, working hand in hand with Arsenal in the Community to inspire and support young people.

Alan Sefton MBE, Head of Arsenal in the Community

Arsenal in the Community is the club’s Community Department. Established in 1985, the team deliver a wide range of sport, social and education programmes in north London and beyond. Arsenal in the Community work is supported by the club and The Arsenal Foundation with funding also coming from a number of external organisations, including the Premier League.

The Arsenal Foundation is a grant-making organisation. Mirroring the club’s philosophy of giving young people a chance, the Foundation works to motivate and inspire young people – often through education and sport – to help them reach their potential and be the best they can be.
The visits and sports activities Arsenal organised at my primary school form some of the fondest memories of my youth. Arsenal are not just a part of the community, but actually a driving force in ensuring we still have a community.

PETER DE VENA FRANKS
Participant on Arsenal in the Community’s sports programmes from 1987-1996
Arsenal in the Community began life holding football and other sports activities at Highbury. Sport has remained the foundation for much of what the team does – it is used to encourage children with their schoolwork and to help participants towards further qualifications and work. To introduce young people to new experiences, and to foster a sense of belonging and increased confidence. While the community team has helped many young people to notable sporting successes, social outcomes have often been the priority of its sport programmes.

Over 50 sports sessions are delivered every week to more than 30 schools.
FOOTBALL

SCHOOL FOOTBALL
Arsenal in the Community has worked in primary and secondary schools across north London since its early beginnings with coaches assisting with PE lessons and coordinating after-school sessions.

The new Arsenal Hub – Home of Arsenal in the Community, has seen sport activities return to the stadium. The centre – which represents the final stage of Arsenal’s Emirates Stadium regeneration project, following the move from Highbury in 2006 – offers local schoolchildren an exciting new facility to use for football and other activities.

 Arsenal in the Community also provides opportunities for pupils to take part in inter-school tournaments.

HELPING TALENTED YOUNG PLAYERS
In recent years Arsenal in the Community has delivered a football development programme where promising players from community projects are accelerated into teams and local leagues to play regular fixtures at weekends and during school holidays. The programme provides players with the opportunity to train twice a week with Arsenal in the Community coaches. While the focus is on encouraging football at grassroots levels, a number of players have progressed into non-league and league clubs through the scheme.

DISTRICT FOOTBALL
The club has a long history of supporting and running local district sides. Since 2004, Arsenal in the Community has jointly financed the Islington Football Development Partnership with Islington Council and Greenwich Leisure Limited.

WOMEN’S FOOTBALL
The Arsenal Ladies were formed out of the Arsenal in the Community team in 1987 under the guidance of Vic Akers. Since going on to establish themselves as the most successful women’s side in England, Arsenal Ladies now do a great deal of outreach work, visiting schools and community projects to raise awareness and participation in the women’s game.

In 2013, Arsenal in the Community and the Arsenal Ladies launched a joint initiative to provide a regular female football programme for girls aged 14 and over. The programme now runs in Islington, Camden, Hackney and Hertsmere.

I have seen the Arsenal in the Community coaches at work and chatted with them in the staffroom and around our school. They are fantastic role models and the sessions have been extremely well received by children and staff alike.

Head of School, Kentish Town CE Primary School
**OTHER SPORTS**

**HOCKEY**  
Established in the 1980s, the club’s hockey programme is still going strong today.

It has introduced many youngsters to the game over the years, as well as providing a pathway for talented young players to take their game on to a competitive level. Through its association with parent club Old Loughtonians, The Gunners Hockey Team has produced county, regional and international players over the years.

**BOWLS**  
Arsenal in the Community has been running indoor bowls sessions for senior citizens since the 1980s too. These sessions, overseen by Arsenal in the Community staff, still run today, with the Arsenal short mat bowls team playing matches at Emirates Stadium and on a number of Islington estates.

**PREMIER LEAGUE 4 SPORT**  
Arsenal in the Community run the multi-sport delivery programme Premier League 4 Sport. Each year, the programme encourages hundreds of young people to be active by participating in Olympic sports as an expression of the London 2012 legacy promise. Championing badminton, basketball, handball, hockey, netball, judo, table tennis and volleyball, Arsenal in the Community partners with local coaches, schools and clubs to create a network where young talent can flourish and friendships and skills develop. The programme is jointly funded by the Premier League and Sport England.

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**DARREN’S STORY** *(Participant 1985-2006)*

Growing up in Islington, my dream was always to play football for Arsenal. Then, one day I was told that Arsenal were taking over our PE lessons at my primary school. My little face lit up as I pictured Arsène Wenger coming into my school playground to sign me up.

Mr. Wenger wasn’t in my playground when I ran down the stairs; instead there were three Arsenal in the Community coaches. On top of that, they didn’t bring footballs with them, but hockey sticks. I’d never seen hockey before so had no idea what it was, but after I got over my initial disappointment of not being scouted, I started to really enjoy the game. The coaches coached that session with so much passion and enthusiasm that everyone involved had a great time and came away with a positive experience. That session changed everything for me and I ended up going to hockey sessions six days every week, all run by the community department. This was great because I played a lot of hockey which meant I became very good very quickly, but it also meant I was away from the bad influences that were around me at the time.

Arsenal very quickly became my home. I was spending all my time there playing hockey, I had all my new friends there from the hockey team, and had the most amazing support network, which included Freddie Hudson, AZ, and Beverley Nicholas from the club. They even made sure that during the hockey off-season and school holidays I had somewhere to go and something positive to do by inviting me to help out at the Arsenal Soccer Schools.

Through their support, I got involved in the England Junior Hockey setup and have worked my way up to become a full international. The guidance and support I received from Arsenal has given me the most amazing foundation to go on and achieve the things I wanted to.
A youngster plays tennis on the pitch at Highbury.
Arsène Wenger and Gilberto visit children at 2007/08 Charity of the Season TreeHouse.
INCLUSIVE SPORT

Arsenal believes that there should be no barrier to playing or enjoying sport. Football sessions for visually impaired and deaf children began at the sports centre at Highbury and continue today in partnership with the Royal London Society for Blind People and the National Deaf Children’s Society.

As a result of the club’s partnership with its former Charity of the Season, TreeHouse, a leading charity for autism education, Arsenal funded sports facilities at the organisation’s school in Muswell Hill. Helped by partnerships with organisations including the Islington Elfrida Society, Interactive, Islington Council and the Camden and Islington Mental Health Foundation Trust, the club’s inclusivity work has expanded over the years.

Regular football sessions are held for young people with Down’s Syndrome, and in special schools across north London. Weekly football sessions take place for young people and adults with a range of mental health diagnoses and learning disabilities.

SUPPORTING DISABILITY CHARITIES

The Arsenal Foundation has supported the work of Metro Blind Sport, a charity that helps people with impaired vision, since 1991.

The Arsenal Foundation recently donated £5,000 to the British Wheelchair Sports Foundation to increase participation in disabled sport amongst people living in the host boroughs of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The project will introduce a range of different sports each year to 250 children and 150 adults, all of whom have a physical, sensory, learning, medical or mental disability.

TB’S STORY

TB attends Arsenal Learning Disabilities sessions in partnership with Elfrida each week. Over the past three years, TB has been given more and more responsibility in the sessions and has grown in confidence and self-belief. He began by assisting with football drills, laying out equipment and helping to get the group organised, before progressing to lead sections of the session.

TB is now a volunteer coach at sports days run by the Islington Resident Engagement team. He has represented the Arsenal in the Community group in friendly matches and has been on trips where he has been put in surroundings that he has been unfamiliar with. Although there have been issues regarding his response to stress, he has always been able to manage the situation himself and to talk through issues to help find a solution.

TB has now enrolled on the Arsenal in the Community employment programme.
With my son a former participant of the club’s trainee programme, I know first-hand the impact that Arsenal in the Community can have on the lives of young people in Islington.

JEREMY CORBYN
Member of Parliament for Islington North since 1983
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING
The strong connection the club has to its local community means Arsenal is well placed to contribute to local and national education priorities.

In 1998, Arsenal in the Community devised the Arsenal Double Club, a literacy intervention scheme. Today, Arsenal in the Community delivers a BTEC Traineeship, a Foundation degree, an employability programme and a range of education programmes in primary and secondary schools, pupil referral units and special schools in north London and beyond.

As well as setting up many participants for successful careers in teaching, sport, retail and in the police force among other areas, the community team’s training programmes have led to many graduates taking on roles at Arsenal Football Club.
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL INITIATIVES

ARSENA DOUBLE CLUB

Inspired by the ‘double’ winning season of 1998, the Arsenal Double Club is an innovative education programme which combines football and learning.

Mirroring the two halves of a game of football, the programme combines a 45 minute classroom session, in which Arsenal related educational resources are used, with a 45 minute football coaching session in the playground. The resources are aimed at reluctant learners and those in need of a boost to their studies.

The Double Club scheme started as a literacy intervention programme and today incorporates a wide range of academic subjects including science, healthy living, literacy, modern languages, history, business studies and geography. In recent years, many of the paper based resources have been replaced by digital versions.

The scheme is now running in over 30 after-school clubs across London and Hertfordshire, with additional weekend and holiday clubs. The programme is used in Arsenal in the Community’s estate work, in pupil referral units, special schools and prisons. Double Club materials have also been used in Arsenal in the Community projects overseas.

PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISIONS

Arsenal in the Community uses the Arsenal name to work closely with young people disengaged from mainstream education.

Arsenal in the Community coaches have been a weekly presence in every Islington pupil referral unit since 2004, delivering football sessions and providing literacy support. Beyond these sessions, the team is involved with mentoring schemes for ex-offenders and high-risk individuals in the Borough.

JULIET BENIS (Headteacher of Ambler School in Islington)

Ambler is a school and children’s centre with 377 amazing pupils aged from six months to 11. We have a very mixed intake with 52 languages spoken (at the last count) and children from all over the world.

The Arsenal Double Club project really tied in well to the work we did with our children. The Double Club takes the form of weekly, 90-minute after-school sessions, with 45 minutes in the classroom and 45 minutes football coaching. Twenty children signed up for the programme.

The Arsenal-themed resources revise literacy and numeracy skills through fun, engaging activities. Pupils write match reports, come up with interview questions and devise football training plans related to Arsenal that reinforce basic literacy and numeracy concepts learnt in curriculum time. It’s learning by stealth!
DOUBLE CLUB SPANISH

Unidad 1
¡Hola!

¡Hola! Mi nombre es [nombre]. Soy de [país]. ¿Cómo te llamas? I am named [nombre]. I am from [país]. What is your name?

Ejercicios de lectura

Unidad 4
¿Cuál es tu nacionalidad?

¿Cuál es tu nacionalidad? Soy [país].

Unidad 5
La condición física

Canta en español:

El entrenador dice: Fantástico!

Rellena la tabla:

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Rellena los globos:

¡Habla en español!

Arsenal Double Club Spanish language work sheets
ENTERPRISE

Set up in 2011, the Enterprise Programme, sees Arsenal in the Community staff provide careers advice to students in north London secondary schools about the different jobs that exist at the football club. The scheme also provides the chance to gain first-hand experience.

Arsenal in the Community also takes part in the annual Premier League Enterprise Challenge, in which students take on the role of their clubs’ marketing director in a Premier League-wide competition.

READING

Arsenal support Islington Borough’s literacy campaign and Premier League Reading Stars. Running since 2003, a player from every Premier League club nominates their favourite adult and children’s book each season. The programme is a partnership between the Football Foundation, National Literacy Trust, the Premier League and the Arts Council England and works to encourage young people to read with their families.

Arsenal in the Community also supports a range of book clubs, poetry events and local literary festivals.

ARSENAL’S READING STARS

David Seaman · Freddie Ljungberg · Sol Campbell · Wojciech Szczesny · Bacary Sagna · Philippe Senderos · Lukasz Fabianski · Jens Lehmann · Manuel Almunia · Per Mertesacker · Theo Walcott · Emiliano Martinez
TRAINEESHIPS

The department’s trainee programmes have helped young people to gain coaching qualifications, vocational training and employment opportunities since 1985, with many former trainees now working in full-time roles at the club and a wide range of jobs locally.

THE BTEC PROGRAMME

Arsenal in the Community has been running education programmes aimed at young adults since the 1980s.

The ‘traineeship’ – now known as the BTEC Sports programme – is its longest standing scheme, combining further education with opportunities to gain practical coaching experience. Participants spend half the week at college studying sports science, physiology, officiating and other aspects of community sport, and the other half of the week with the Arsenal in the Community team, where they receive coaching experience and are mentored towards FA Level 1 and 2 coaching badges.

ARSENAL FOUNDATION DEGREE

The Arsenal Football and Community Sports Coaching Foundation Degree is a two year course, which prepares students for careers in community football coaching and PE teaching. The London Metropolitan University accredited vocational course is jointly delivered by the university, City and Islington College and Arsenal in the Community.

Modules include sports science, and psychology, with two coaching modules delivered by Arsenal in the Community. Arsenal in the Community also arrange supervised work experience in local schools for the students.
There have only been positives from my time as a trainee at Arsenal. I experienced a very enjoyable and beneficial learning environment courtesy of excellent supervision and well organised staff. The traineeship gave me a great foundation of essential skills that has assisted me throughout my life, such as team work, effective communication, problem solving and personal responsibility. I love football and I love Arsenal so it was nice to learn how to coach the Arsenal way and put that to use by providing regular coaching programmes to the youth in the community. I also enjoyed going abroad with the department and meeting new people who expressed their appreciation and love of football.

The traineeship at Arsenal has contributed greatly towards the person I am today and has been a significant factor in many of my life’s accomplishments, including my current role as a Police Officer for the Metropolitan Police. My time as a trainee assisted me in my social development which enabled me to grow in confidence as a person and hone my people skills. The traineeship provided me with invaluable tools to be able to effectively communicate to large groups of people, work as part of a team, take personal responsibility to complete tasks and to respect race and diversity, as I used to work with and coach people of all different backgrounds and cultures.

I was looking for a sports science degree with a football emphasis and a high practical content. This degree delivered this and much more. I feel confident coaching a wide age range of players, understanding what the different challenges are for each age group. I did not expect to enjoy it so much and have been inspired to continue my learning, perhaps leading to a Masters next year. The involvement of Arsenal in the Community was a huge plus, not least for all the networking opportunities and access to work experience.
THE ARSENAL IN THE COMMUNITY STORY

THE ARSENAL GAP PROGRAMME

The Arsenal Gap Programme offers young people the chance to coach ‘the Arsenal way’ locally and overseas.

Running since 2006, the scheme helps participants attain the FA Level 1 and FA Youth Module 1 coaching awards, as well as offering various opportunities for additional training and development.

On gaining these qualifications, the ‘Gappers’ are then placed in local schools to gain valuable coaching experience before travelling abroad to one of the club’s international Soccer Schools or community projects. The scheme has so far seen 157 volunteers work in over 120 schools in 16 countries across the world.

ARSENAL ‘GAPPER’ JACK IN INDONESIA

From the moment we arrived in Jakarta we were amazed at how welcoming the people were towards us, not just our friends and colleagues but the entire city. You realise the power of the Arsenal name straight away.

As coaches we worked with the local Arsenal soccer school, as well as working as classroom assistants at a local elementary school four times a week. In our spare time we played for a team in the Jakarta expat league called The Vikings which was made up of Danes, Americans, Indonesians and many more. We were lucky enough to participate in a tournament in Hong Kong with them which was a great bonus!

The four months in Indonesia were memorable for so many reasons and I hope one day I will be able to return. The year taught me a lot about coaching and teaching and helped develop me as a person too. I will never forget it.

120 SCHOOLS VISITED WORLDWIDE WITH THE GAP PROGRAMME
ARSENAL EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMME

Helping to tackle high unemployment in London in the 1980s was the focus of Arsenal in the Community’s first employability programme and remains a central objective of the team today, with many participants going on to work for the club in some capacity. The club runs an employability programme, which helps prepare and support local people from Islington, Camden and Hackney into employment.

Staff from Arsenal in the Community deliver a range of courses over a 12 week period which focus on reducing the barriers into work. The community team also assists in helping to put graduates of the programme in touch with local employers, with many participants of the scheme put forward for an interview for matchday work at Emirates Stadium.

THE ARSENAL RED ZONE LEARNING CENTRE

The Arsenal Learning Centre provides a range of courses for adults wanting help with gaining the skills they need to find work and build confidence, in partnership with Islington Council. Originally housed at Highbury, a new learning centre was built outside Emirates Stadium as part of the stadium regeneration project. It is now based in the new Arsenal Hub – Home of Arsenal in the Community. The centre provides free adult courses in IT, English, Maths in addition to helping people find employment.

BORRY JARJU’S STORY

I was born and raised in the Gambia, and I came to the UK four years ago. It was tough, of course, and it’s very difficult to adapt to living in a new country if you don’t have any help from either organisations or people in your new home. But I did. I was very lucky to find Arsenal in the Community through Freedom From Torture, and they have helped me with lots of things in my life. The Arsenal Employability Programme has been a massive help. The people there helped me learn about my responsibilities as an employee, and also the responsibilities that employers have to their staff – every aspect of being part of the workforce in this country. They helped me write my CV, apply for jobs and learn to cope with interviews. It went so well that recently I got a job with Debenhams, working in their cafeteria. It feels really good to have a job. To tell you the truth – and you might think I am over-emphasising but I’m not – the most important thing in life is to feel appreciated, and Arsenal in the Community have given me that. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate everyone who’s helped me. The wonderful people there have all been exceptional to me and given me so much support. I thought Arsenal was just a football club, but it goes beyond that. It’s not just about the team or even about the club helping kids to play football. It helps build people’s lives.

ALEXANDER SMITH’S STORY

Alexander has been going to the Arsenal Learning Centre for a year and a half. He attended the Employment Support drop-in and was referred onto the Delaware North Companies Interview Skills and Work Preparation courses.

He now works for Delaware at Emirates Stadium in hospitality. Although Alexander’s background is in hospitality, having worked for 20 years in the sector, he has gained a great deal from doing these courses. His main achievement though was gaining increased confidence in his dealings with others. The group work in the course has helped him speak in public, and he has since enjoyed interacting with clients in his new role. Alexander has done the L1 Food Hygiene course at the Arsenal Red Zone. He plans to complete IT courses including ‘Word Processing in a day’ and ‘PowerPoint in a day’.

(200th individual to find employment through the programme)
The Arsenal in the Community Story

Arsenal in the Community in Numbers

- **407** hours of delivery each week
- **159** venues used each week
- **5,139** participants each week
- **30** regular sessions run each week
- **358** participants each week
THE ARSENAL HUB – HOME OF ARSENAL IN THE COMMUNITY

NEW TO BE OPEN TO PARTICIPANTS PER WEEK

30,000 PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN COACHED SINCE 1985

910 TRAINEES SINCE 1985

1.3 MILLION PARTICIPANTS

6,500,000 HOURS DELIVERED WITH DEDICATION
1891
Arsenal’s early matchday programme cards are sold for a penny to raise money for Homes for Working Boys in Beresford Street, Woolwich.

1912
Just before the club’s relocation to north London, in April 1912, Woolwich Arsenal organise a special match, which raises over £100 for the Titanic Disaster Fund.

1918
Following the First World War, the club make a financial contribution to the Islington War Memorial Fund and donate one thousand guineas to the Great Northern Hospital on Holloway Road, for the endowment of a bed.

1946
The club contributes to the rebuilding of St Mary’s Church on Upper Street, which was bombed during World War II.

1960s
Boxers v Jockeys matches at Highbury raise money for good causes.

1986
Community Liaison Officer Vic Akers, forms the Arsenal Ladies.

1989
Arsenal opens a newly redeveloped sports centre at Highbury, which soon becomes the hub of the club’s community activity.

1985
Arsenal in the Community is established in response to inner city unrest, with a traineeship employment programme.
1989
Arsenal in the Community host the first Arsenal Soccer Schools in Islington

1991
The Arsenal Charitable Trust is launched. It raises over £2 million for good causes, before the ‘Arsenal Foundation’ is established in 2012

1998
The innovative Arsenal Double Club is launched to help children with their literacy and numeracy using football as a route to engage them in exercises

2003 - 11
The Charity of the Season initiative launches with ChildLine, followed by the David Rocastle Trust, the Willow Foundation, TreeHouse, Teenage Cancer Trust, Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity and Centrepoint with over £2.5m raised for legacy projects which will help thousands of young people

2006
The move from Highbury to Emirates Stadium is the catalyst for a major regeneration project, which includes the construction of a new recycling centre and 3,000 new homes. The move also sees a new focus in the Arsenal in the Community team on outreach work in the borough

2008
Dennis Bergkamp opens the new Cruyff Court in Elthorne Park – a public playground funded by the Dutchman, which provides a safe area to play for local children

2011
Save the Children become club’s global charity partner

2012
The Arsenal Foundation reaches £1m milestone raised in aid of Save the Children

2015
The Arsenal Hub, Home of Arsenal in the Community, opens its doors

2015
The Arsenal Foundation is formed
Arsenal in the Community has been a pioneering force in the development of sports based social inclusion initiatives and its work has been recognised across the board from football administrators to Government ministers. Through its involvement in the Positive Futures and Kicks programmes Substance has closely monitored Arsenal in the Community’s achievements which has consistently broken new ground and set the pace for others.

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PROFESSOR TIM CRABBE
Director and Chair of Substance, social research company
SOCIAL INCLUSION
These schemes believe in the notion of ‘sport for good’ rather than ‘sport for sport’s sake’ and prioritise social contributions ahead of sporting outcomes. In recent years expectations have grown from central and local Government, football authorities and the public for professional football clubs to play their part in addressing some of the social issues faced by society.

Arsenal’s Positive Futures and Kicks programmes currently form the umbrella for this work at the club. Connecting to disengaged individuals and groups is difficult and although the club does not claim to have solutions to some of the complex issues participants face, these projects are well positioned to make significant contributions to them and the communities in which they live. Numerous case studies reflect how Arsenal in the Community has been able to push the boundaries.

All too often young people can easily find themselves drawn into the criminal justice system; involved in gangs, exposed to substance misuse and other negative influences. Offering positive activities and a suitable role model does go some way to act as a diversion but the issues are far more complicated. Targeting vulnerable individuals and supporting them is an approach the department has adopted.

Individuals benefit from Arsenal in the Community’s attention and so do the communities in which they live. The work has been the catalyst for regeneration and a number of local pitches have been refurbished to create places where young people actually want to play and feel a sense of belonging and connection to Arsenal.
POSITIVE FUTURES

In partnership with Islington Housing, a range of programmes take place on local estates including youth engagement football sessions that offer additional activities such as trips, workshops, homework clubs and volunteer placements. The scheme engages around 150 10-19 year olds each week across ten Islington Estates.

PAUL’S STORY (Former Positive Futures participant)

I grew up in Finsbury Park close to the Andover Estate, and still live there now. Arsenal Positive Futures dropped some leaflets off at my secondary school in my first year and that’s where my relationship with the club began.

I attended both the Andover Estate and Market Road football sessions, and in my latter years at school I asked to do my work experience with Positive Futures. After that they offered me voluntary hours, then casual work.

Positive Futures put me on courses such as my FA Level 1 coaching qualification, first aid, drug and alcohol awareness and even courses to help me manage behaviour on an estate session.

I had dabbled with drugs for 15 years. I admitted I had a problem in 2008 and went to a meeting but relapsed and became totally obsessed with cocaine, to the point where nothing else mattered. I lost my job and my wife asked me to leave.

I knew of someone at Arsenal and his work in the community and out of desperation I contacted him and told him of my woes. He immediately offered his support and I was introduced to my local Drug and Alcohol unit. Along with this, the staff at Arsenal also provided great personal support and linked me to their Positive Futures programme and all that it can bring. Within a few weeks I had completed my FA level 1 coaching course and I am now studying a wide range of other qualifications, as well as working on several youth initiatives. In January 2015 I reached the milestone of being clean from drugs for six years. Over the past five years I’ve been a mentor for Arsenal in the Community project that supports drug and alcohol service users through their recovery.

Arsenal in the Community has been my saving grace, with the help I have received and the confidence shown in me, my life has gone full circle.

RHYS SHIRLEY-CLARKE STORY (Positive Futures coach)

I grew up in Finsbury Park close to the Andover Estate, and still live there now. Arsenal Positive Futures dropped some leaflets off at my secondary school in my first year and that’s where my relationship with the club began.

While in college I played for the Boreham Wood FC Under-18 and reserve teams, where I did my FA Level 2 coaching qualification. I continued to work with Positive Futures and was also offered work at Arsenal Soccer Schools in the summer.

After a couple of years I started coaching for Arsenal on sessions in Islington’s pupil referral units – primary and secondary. A year later, the head teacher of the primary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) asked if I would do some voluntary hours. I accepted and they later put me on agency work and then offered me a full-time role. After my full-time work in the PRU, I still go out on to the estates and coach on Arsenal sessions.

Yes it’s a job, but I feel every time I see these young people that I’m giving back. I want some of these young people to follow the path I have and not get caught up in what might be happening in their area.
KICKS

The Arsenal Kicks initiative is a national programme that brings together the football industry with the police to help young people keep away from anti-social behaviour, drugs and crime, and adopt positive influences. The scheme is founded on regular training sessions, weekly matches and football tournaments. While the immediate focus of the programme is football coaching, Arsenal in the Community coaches are really concerned with what happens off the pitch.

Coaches provide close support to participants away from sessions, in the hope that they can positively impact participants’ development over the longer term.

Since it was established in 2006, the programme has grown to cover Islington, Hackney, Camden and Westminster.

Many young people have progressed from Kicks participants to working part-time with the scheme and other Arsenal in the Community projects.

DAVIS RIZZOLO’S STORY (Former Arsenal Kicks participant)

My lowest point came in prison. I grew up in Hackney, got involved in gangs and ended up stabbing someone. I was sentenced to three years at Feltham Young Offenders institution, but I had problems in prison. When my mum came to see me I was behind a glass partition after a fight. I always gave her a hug but when she started crying, I couldn’t. Here I was, her youngest son, in prison, and unable to stop her crying.

Something inside me clicked and I started to behave. A member of the Arsenal in the Community team came to visit me and something one of the Kicks project leaders, John, said stuck in my mind. Most people who talked to me about coming out of prison had said, “Do this, do that,” and I’d thought, “What if I don’t want to do that?” John said, “What do YOU want to do when you get out? What do YOU want to do with the rest of your life?”

I was released after 18 months and Arsenal in the Community gave me a chance. I’d already got a Level 1 coaching badge so I was released on Wednesday, went to Arsenal on Thursday and was offered coaching work on Friday. I started on the Monday. I was welcomed, and made to feel normal. I had an electronic tag and a 7pm curfew. When I was younger I’d thought that prison would be my life but the people around me gave me hope in myself.

I took more coaching badges in all sorts of sports – I even ended up teaching Gaelic football in Essex – and coached on the Kicks social inclusion programme. I then set up my own scheme, called Ripple, which uses the ripple effect to teach schoolchildren how crime doesn’t affect just one person. I did a lot of mentoring and peer support, and after working part-time for Arsenal was given a full-time job.

I’m now coaching at an Arsenal Soccer School in Oman, as well as running fitness boot camps. The club helped me turn my life around, and changed me as a person. Arsenal in the Community made me realise that anything is possible.
Kieran Gibbs visits a Kicks session at Rowley Way, Camden
FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

The Arsenal Foundation has helped to fund a joint project between Arsenal in the Community and Freedom from Torture, a medical foundation that helps rehabilitate survivors of torture.

The programme is made up of football and classroom sessions, with the football sessions used to help participants develop confidence as well as language and social skills. The sessions help to create a sense of belonging and offer opportunities for training and employment.

VICTOR MACAULEY’S STORY (Freedom from Torture participant)

I couldn’t have imagined a few years ago that I would be where I am today, involved with Arsenal in the Community sessions in London. I was born in Sierra Leone and raised by my mum, as my parents broke up before I was born. My mum was shot and killed in front of me during the civil war in 1999, when I was six.

I spent two years on the front line as a rebel fighter, before eventually going back to live with my dad. But he was ill, and he passed away when I was 16. I came to the UK soon after that in June 2010 and had no choice but to beg on the streets.

I came to Freedom from Torture just over a year ago, where I was introduced to Arsenal, and it has literally changed my life. The people I’ve met on the football sessions are like family to me now. We really respect each other. Lots of people have helped me get to where I am now and I am so grateful. I am also 110 per cent an Arsenal fan, and have been since I was eight or nine.

It’s amazing to think that when I was in Sierra Leone I would watch these legends play the game, and then I had the opportunity to come to this country and visit Emirates Stadium – it was mind-blowing.

Arsenal, like many football clubs in England, are doing so much for other people, doing things together like a family, and it’s just fantastic.

STREET CHILD WORLD CUP

In 2014, Arsenal in the Community worked with Islington Council’s leaving care service to provide training to players in the build-up to the Street Child World Cup in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 2014.

The girls reached the quarter finals of the World Cup, and were voted the ‘friendliest team’ in the tournament.

Since returning to the United Kingdom, the team have been involved in fundraising to help teams from poorer regions take part in the 2018 World Cup in Russia.
As CEO, I am personally committed to ensuring that everybody connected with Arsenal is treated equally, with dignity and respect.

IVAN GAZIDIS
Arsenal Chief Executive Officer
ARSENAL FOR EVERYONE
Arsenal for Everyone celebrates the diversity and equality of the club and its fanbase. The initiative coordinates a wide range of activities to encourage everybody connected with Arsenal – irrespective of race, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability and gender – to feel an equal sense of belonging to the club. Arsenal in the Community champions the Arsenal for Everyone message in schools and community groups through a range of interfaith, anti-racism, anti-bullying and homelessness sessions.

Arsenal became the first football club to receive the Advanced Level of the Equality Standard award in November 2011. Arsenal for Everyone formed part of the club’s work towards Kick It Out’s Standard which is a framework devised for clubs to help with their equality and diversity practices.

Arsenal have demonstrated consistent good practice and led from the top. Their commitment to engaging with fans from ethnic minority communities and acting as a fair and equitable employer is something others should aspire to.

Lord Herman Ouseley, Chair of Kick It Out
As one of the patrons of Arsenal’s official LGBT supporters group, I am immensely proud of and grateful to the club for the ‘Arsenal For Everyone’ initiative. There are lots of memories to treasure from the experience of going to Highbury as a kid. I was born in 1974 and was taken to Highbury for the first time as a seven year old. I started going regularly with my brother and my friend Darren in 1988. We were Junior Gunners and I was lithe enough back then to hand over a shiny pound coin and slip through the turnstile with ease. I cheered when Smudger scored, scoffed when the opposition laughably tried to get past Tony Adams and David O’Leary and marvelled at the emerging midfield talent of Michael Thomas and – still my favourite player – David Rocastle.

The crowd were vocal back then to say the least and you could feel the foundations shake. We sang in praise of our heroes. We also chanted our contempt for the opposition. Anything that was perceived as a weakness was considered fair game. And I joined in. Except when we played Tottenham.

It’s hard to imagine now but it’s not all that long ago that Spurs would come to Highbury and a significant group of our supporters would sing about ‘gassing Y***’. And when Watford came, the songs would usually include something at the expense of their Chairman at the time, Elton John, inevitably focusing on his sexuality.

As a young football fan, there was so much I felt a part of at Arsenal. But as a scared gay Jewish teenager, there was so much I didn’t. Twenty five years later and something extraordinary has happened in Britain, something that was inconceivable in my youth. We have an equal age of consent, gay marriage and laws to protect from discrimination in the workplace. And if you’re reading this and you’re straight, chances are you’ll know someone who isn’t, because that person now feels able to identify openly as gay without living in fear.

The world of sport is still in the process of catching up. But this is where Arsenal is helping to lead the way. I have been incredibly moved by the concept of Arsenal For Everyone. There’ll be a significant number of young gay fans who feel included by the club in a way that my generation never could. It really makes a difference.

TACKLING HOMOPHOBIA
Arsenal Football Club’s LGBT supporters group, ‘GayGooners’ was established in 2013. Shortly after their launch, members of the group took part in London Pride 2013, becoming the first Premier League club to be represented. The GayGooners’ banner is displayed within the stadium bowl at Emirates Stadium.

Arsenal played an active role in the Paddy Power Rainbow Laces campaign, which saw players and staff wearing special laces at the club’s Premier League match against Manchester City in September 2014 at Emirates Stadium, to show their opposition to homophobia in football.

MATT LUCAS’ STORY (GayGooners patron)
As one of the patrons of Arsenal’s official LGBT supporters group, I am immensely proud of and grateful to the club for the ‘Arsenal For Everyone’ initiative. There are lots of memories to treasure from the experience of going to Highbury as a kid. I was born in 1974 and was taken to Highbury for the first time as a seven year old. I started going regularly with my brother and my friend Darren in 1988. We were Junior Gunners and I was lithe enough back then to hand over a shiny pound coin and slip through the turnstile with ease. I cheered when Smudger scored, scoffed when the opposition laughably tried to get past Tony Adams and David O’Leary and marvelled at the emerging midfield talent of Michael Thomas and – still my favourite player – David Rocastle.

The crowd were vocal back then to say the least and you could feel the foundations shake. We sang in praise of our heroes. We also chanted our contempt for the opposition. Anything that was perceived as a weakness was considered fair game. And I joined in. Except when we played Tottenham.
The initiative which is spearheaded by the National Asians in Football Forum aims to encourage South Asian women into football.

In October 2014, Arsenal welcomed a group of 20 south Asian girls from the Headscarves to Football Scarves initiative for its Arsenal for Everyone dedicated matchday.

Butch Fazal, Chairman of the NAIFF said: "Arsenal were the first Premier League club to come to us and say they’d love for some of our girls to come along to the game. Ultimately they are the mothers of the next generation of South Asians, and if they know it’s a safe environment to go to they can hopefully lift the stigma attached to football and black and ethnic minority supporters in the grounds. Things have changed since the darker days of the 70s and 80s. Our students are looking forward to the game with enthusiasm."
MATCHDAY ACCESS FOR DISABLED SUPPORTERS

The club is committed to making sure that disability is not a barrier to enjoying football. Arsenal's home received the first Centre of Excellence awards from Level Playing Field (LPF), the campaigning and advisory organisation that works to promote improved access to sports stadiums. Facilities for disabled supporters on matchdays at Emirates Stadium include:

- 102 Blue Badge Match Day parking places.
- 250 wheelchair accessible seats located throughout the stadium, including 13 wheelchair accessible places within the away section.
- 38 disabled accessible toilets.
- A guide dog toilet facility, also the first in a Premier League ground.
- A special matchday lounge at Emirates Stadium.
- A 'Changing Places' fully accessible disabled toilet was installed in April 2014. Changing Places toilets are larger than a standard disabled toilet and include a height-adjustable bench, a hoist and room for two carers.
- A dedicated matchday commentary service for visually impaired supporters.

The club's purple membership scheme gives over 800 disabled supporters the opportunity to buy match tickets at the concessionary rate of half price for themselves and free for an enabler.

BOB’S STORY (Arsenal supporter)

I have been an Arsenal fan since my father taught me to say “Up the Arsenal” in the early 1960’s.

In the late 70s, I joined the Royal Air Force as a Physical Training Instructor (PTI), attending fixtures at Highbury was difficult. Like many members of the Armed Forces, I relied on the radio and ‘MotD’ for my football fix.

I became one of a select band of PTI’s, chosen to become a Parachute Jumping Instructor, responsible for teaching members of the Armed Forces the skill of Military Parachuting. It was whilst jumping with my students in the summer of 1984 that I experienced a malfunction of both my main and reserve parachutes and fell 2000m to the ground! That was a proper “OUCH”! Amongst other things I sustained a spinal cord injury, which left me paralysed and reliant on a wheelchair for my mobility.

Whilst I was still at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, I enquired about the possibility of attending Highbury. Back then there were five wheelchair users and their companions sat with the ‘Roller’ at the corner of the Clock-End. Facilities were sparse, but I was in and became a regular attendee. I became a season ticket holder as soon as Arsenal undertook to provide them. The club continued to improve facilities at Highbury and went out of their way to welcome many more disabled fans.

At the Emirates, I continue to have a season ticket, due in no small part to both the excellent facilities and help provided by the Disability Liaison Team.

The facilities at the Emirates far exceed those at almost any other venue in the country. Wheelchair supporters have a choice of areas to watch the game from – something very rarely afforded to individuals with disabilities.

The Emirates enables me to attend matches as an individual, (albeit with friends), allowing me to be independent.

I for one certainly appreciate the club’s approach of inclusion for all, irrespective of an individual’s disability.
Arsenal Football Club is extremely proud of the benefits that have been brought to the community as part of our move to Emirates Stadium.

In addition to the provision of affordable housing, the Emirates Stadium project has provided a host of other community benefits, from a state-of-the-art waste recycling centre to the fantastic Arsenal Hub – Home of Arsenal in the Community.

The stadium move has led to major investment in an area that suffered from serious deprivation.
5. REGENERATION
When planning began to move to a new stadium in 1999, Arsenal wanted to remain in Islington, the home of the club since 1913. In the process, the Emirates Stadium project became much more than simply building a new home. The new ground was the obvious focal point of the club’s move but it was also the catalyst for the regeneration of an area which had suffered from serious deprivation.
As one of the largest regeneration schemes in Europe at the time, the Emirates Stadium project provided employment opportunities for many in the borough. 2,600 new jobs were created through the development, of which more than 1,800 were long-term positions.

A £60 million state-of-the-art waste recycling centre was built as part of the Emirates Stadium project. The centre, which services Islington, Camden, Hackney and Haringey, has contributed to increased recycling rates in north London. The facility houses an award-winning interactive education centre in partnership with the Science Museum.

Affordable housing has formed a major part of the Emirates Stadium regeneration programme. Over 3,000 new and refurbished homes, of which 40 per cent are classified as affordable housing, have been built.

It’s 15 years since Arsenal submitted their plans to Islington Council for their new stadium and related developments.

At that time I was the Council’s lead officer with responsibility for ensuring that the Council was able to optimise the opportunities and benefits to the borough, if planning permission was awarded by the Council and approved by the Mayor of London.

The Arsenal Regeneration Scheme was the pioneer in the UK of club based stadium-led place-making and acts as a base model for stadium led development in London and elsewhere.

Regardless of whether one loves or loathes or is indifferent to football, there is no doubting that the new stadium and its associated housing and other developments has brought substantial betterment to the area and, as always anticipated and encouraged, has acted as a catalyst for other investment in the area.

There’s no doubt in my mind – and indeed others – that the Arsenal Regeneration Scheme – and their associated Arsenal in the Community – has proved mutually beneficial for the club, for the residents and for the borough as a whole. Their presence and engagement in Islington is a strength and is envied by many.

SARAH EBANJA (Islington Council’s lead officer during the move to Emirates Stadium)
The Arsenal Hub represents the final phase of the Emirates Stadium regeneration project. The facility centres around a 50m x 18m 4G astroturf indoor pitch. There are meeting areas, classrooms and office space to house the Arsenal in the Community team.

As with the old sports centre at Highbury, the Hub will be an important space in the lives of many local people, and for some, something close to a second home, where a warm welcome and a sense of belonging is guaranteed.

These new facilities represent an exciting step forward for the club. We remember the important role the old JVC Centre played in the lives of thousands of individuals; giving them a sense of belonging and providing tangible opportunities for local people. The years since our move to Emirates Stadium have seen our work reach deeper into communities and has galvanised important relationships with our partners. To be able to combine the network we have built across the borough with a new permanent home for our community work will be very powerful.

Freddie Hudson, Arsenal in the Community manager
REFURBISHING FOOTBALL PITCHES

The Arsenal Foundation has provided financial support for the refurbishment of football pitches in Islington, Hackney and Camden, with the resurfaced or new facilities then used for a range of Arsenal in the Community sessions.

In Islington, pitches have been redeveloped at Quill Street, McCall and Hollins House, King Square Estate, Rosemary Gardens, Market Road, William Tyndale School, St John’s School, St Mark’s School and Elthorne Park. In Camden and Hackney, the club have helped rejuvenate playing surfaces at Torriano School, Rowley Way, Castlehaven and Suffolk Estate. Additional surfaces in the borough have been refurbished as a result of the Emirates Stadium regeneration project.

IN FOCUS – TORRIANO PRIMARY SCHOOL CAMDEN

Arsenal in the Community has worked with Torriano Primary School for many years, running the Arsenal Double Club education programme at the school along with other programmes.

In 2013 the school made a successful application to the Arsenal Foundation for funds to upgrade their school pitch from tarmac to 3G astro-turf.

With the pitch re-surfaced, the school now hosts Arsenal Double Club holiday projects too, which provide literacy booster lessons and football coaching for up to 50 primary age pupils from the local area. Arsenal also run a languages programme at the school, and help with their annual achievement assemblies.
The exciting partnership between Arsenal and Save the Children is built on our common belief that every child is born to fulfil their potential. By working together on education we can help thousands of children – from Islington to as far afield as China – do just that.

JUSTIN FORSYTHE
Save the Children Chief Executive
6 GIVING
orth or south of the river, and today with a
global following, Arsenal has always
understood its place in the community.
The club’s early matchday programme
cards were sold for a penny to raise
money for Homes for Working Boys in Beresford Street,
Woolwich, when the club was located in its original
home in south London. In 2004, the club’s charitable
giving was consolidated with a designated Charity of
the Season and over the past decade, charities such
as ChildLine, the David Rocastle Trust, the Willow
Foundation, TreeHouse, Teenage Cancer Trust,
Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity
and Centrepoint have all benefited from partnerships
to fund new facilities and projects supporting
young people.
The Arsenal Foundation was launched in May 2012 to
expand the scale of the club’s good work even further.
It has so far committed more than £1.5m to support a
range of community and charitable projects in the UK
and overseas, helping to upgrade community football
pitches across north London, and supporting the work
of the Foundation’s official charity partners Save the
Children, Willow Foundation and Islington Giving.
Arsenal continues to maintain relationships with a
number of its former charities of the season too.

Alexis Sanchez and
Santi Cazorla help to
open Centrepoint’s
Arsenal-funded health
and wellbeing facility
for homeless young
people in Soho
Official Charity Partners – Save the Children

Save the Children is the world’s leading independent organisation fighting for the rights of children worldwide.

Save the Children has been The Arsenal Foundation’s global charity partner since 2011.

With projects both in Islington and overseas – including in China and Indonesia – the club is helping the charity in its efforts to give more young people a chance to become the best they can be.

**Domestic**

The Arsenal Foundation has granted £70,000 to help bring Save the Children’s ‘Eat, Sleep, Learn, Play!’ (ESLP) and ‘Families and Schools Together’ (FAST) programmes to Islington for the first time, improving the well-being of over 100 families in the local area. Duncombe Primary School and St Mark’s Primary School, both located close to Emirates Stadium, embarked on the eight-week FAST programme in 2012. Parents were given the chance to develop the skills and confidence needed to take a more active role in their children’s education, and in the local community as a whole.

**International Projects**

To coincide with the Arsenal Asia Tour in 2012, The Arsenal Foundation pledged £300,000 to Save the Children to support an education project in China, helping to improve the quality of education for disadvantaged children aged 6-15 in some of Beijing’s most under-resourced schools. Together Arsenal and Save the Children committed to help train 285 teachers and 31 head teachers. The three-year programme has impacted close to 30,000 young pupils.

Arsenal donated a further £300,000 to Save the Children’s work in Indonesia in 2013. The partnership will deliver vocational training to 4,000 vulnerable young people in Bandung province, West Java over three years.

**Disaster Relief**

Arsenal is also a supporter of Save the Children’s relief work, making contributions to the Japan earthquake and tsunami appeal, and to disaster relief work in East Africa, Syria, the Philippines and Nepal.
Established in 1999 by Arsenal legend Bob Wilson and his wife Megs following the loss of their daughter Anna to cancer, the Willow Foundation offers quality of life and quality time to seriously ill young adults aged 16-40 through the provision of special days.

Arsenal and Willow have had a close association for a number of years. Willow was the club’s charity of the season in 2006/07, when the organisations worked together to raise £200,000 for the Willow Foundation. Over the next three years, The Arsenal Foundation is continuing to support Willie’s work, as it aims to give more seriously ill young people the chance to achieve a dream or return some normality back to their lives.

To date, Willow has provided more than 9,000 special days for such individuals.

LUKE’S STORY (Willow Foundation beneficiary)

After having a grapefruit size tumour removed from my face and neck, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. This hit me for six. I was newly married with two small children, our life should have just been getting started yet I felt it was starting to end.

I saw my haematologist who set my treatment plan and with that the chemo started. You hear how bad chemo is but I don’t think anyone would ever understand just how bad it makes you feel. I was lucky enough to have the best wife a man could ask for. When I was down she picked me up and when I felt sorry for myself she told me to pull myself together. As the chemo went on and with radiotherapy just around the corner, life was starting to beat us. It wasn’t just about me – my friends and family were living this nightmare with me.

It was around then that a nurse told me about Willow. To be honest I thought it was too good to be true and I did wonder if anyone would be able to help me and my family find the light at the end of the tunnel again. We spoke to Willow and asked if they could help us with a vow renewal day.

It wasn’t just about renewing our vows; it was about drawing a line under what had been, and looking forward to what will be. Planning this day gave us something to think about and look forward to; it gave us a new focus. Now we were talking about what we would do ‘when’ I beat this not ‘if’ I beat this.

After a year the good news came that the treatment had worked and I was given the all clear. That meant the big day was near, looking back I think the best thing was everyone from our family and friends that had lived the hard times with us was able to celebrate the future together. The big day was wonderful and went without a hitch. We really could not have asked for a better day – it was something I will never forget.

Thanks to Willow everyone was smiling again and talking about the good day we had just had instead of the terrible year we had just been through.
LOCAL GIVING

ISLINGTON GIVING
To help celebrate Arsenal’s 100th year in Islington in 2013, the Arsenal Foundation made a donation of £150,000 to Islington Giving, over three years. The funding will be used across a range of youth engagement initiatives including Friday night football sessions across the borough.

THE GUNNERS FUND
The Gunners Fund was launched in 2012 with the aim of supporting local projects and good causes in the boroughs of Islington, Camden and Hackney by offering smaller grants of up to £2,500.

In the time since its launch, the Fund has made a real difference to sport, education and community arts projects locally, with over £150,000 of local grants made so far.

JOE HAGLAND’S STORY

The Gunners Fund supported Islington Council’s Pensioners’ Christmas lunch. Joe Hagland, 79, was among those who attended.

As a local lad, Islington born and bred, I’d been to the pensioners’ Christmas lunch before – but last year’s was better than ever.

You have to be lucky to get a ticket. There are only 80 seats so once you’ve applied your name goes into a hat, and I was thrilled when I got a card through the post to say I’d got a place.

I live in sheltered accommodation in Highbury and didn’t think anyone else here would be lucky enough to go, but lo and behold six of us got tickets, so off we went to the Town Hall just before Christmas.

It was wonderful. The Mayor was there, along with the council leader and several councillors. We had a lovely lunch – soup to start, then turkey with all the trimmings – and free drink: tea, coffee and some sort of brandy cream thing!

There was singing and dancing and there was a raffle too with prizes starting at £25, and a woman on a table near us was delighted when she won £100. Not only did we get a free lunch, and get waited on, but some of us got money just for going!

I hate it when pensioners, even though I am one, moan about life. We’re spoiled these days and we’re very lucky. We have so many opportunities – a free bus pass, clubs to go to if you can make it – that you don’t have to be lonely. You can still have a wonderful life.

It’s lovely to see the support that we get both from Arsenal and local businesses. That’s changed over the years and totally for the better.
THE ARSENAL IN THE COMMUNITY STORY

ARSÉNE WENGER ADDRESSING THE 2014 ARSENAL FOUNDATION BALL

ARSENAL FOUNDATION AMBASSADORS

A group of legendary club figures have taken on the role of Arsenal Foundation ambassadors. Arsène Wenger, Bob Wilson, Liam Brady, Martin Keown and Robert Pires all work to raise awareness of the Foundation’s work, and to inspire contributors and beneficiaries alike. Wenger has visited the work of the Arsenal Foundation and its partners locally and in Indonesia. Keown [see below] has spent time at a Save the Children project in Jordan, with Pires travelling to the Arsenal Foundation-funded Save the Children education programme in Indonesia in 2015, and Wilson and Brady supporting the club’s charitable work back home.

MARTIN KEOWN’S STORY

THROUGH THE CLUB’S PARTNERSHIP WITH SAVE THE CHILDREN, ARSENAL FOUNDATION AMBASSADOR MARTIN KEOWN WAS INVITED TO OPEN A NEW FOOTBALL PITCH FOR SYRIAN CHILDREN IN THE ZA’ATARI REFUGEE CAMP IN JORDAN IN 2013.

In March 2013 I travelled to the Za’atari refugee camp. A base camp has been set up there for Syrian refugees arriving to escape the shelling and shooting. When I visited, it was home to 150,000 families, with another 7,000 arriving each week. In my role as Arsenal Foundation Ambassador, I was invited to do some football coaching on the pitch the charity had built in the middle of the camp.

It was a very moving and powerful experience, meeting these kids who had come from the battleground to the playground.

One boy who I talked to told me that he spent each day in Syria wondering how long he was going to live. Now in Jordan, he said he woke up thinking about having fun, playing football and seeing his friends. Life for these guys was only about survival of the fittest but the charity was trying to help prepare them for coming into a normal society.

Playing in England, you can lose perspective on just how big a tool football is in people’s lives. It can create discipline, respect and an element of fun. During my visit, I saw how it brought people together and worked as a method to put basics back into people’s behaviour and get their lives back together.
FUNDRAISING

The Arsenal Foundation holds a number of fundraising events across the season to encourage its supporters, players and staff to get involved and understand the work of the charity.

DEDICATED CHARITY MATCHDAY
Arsenal holds an annual dedicated charity matchday at Emirates Stadium before Christmas which sees the manager and the first team squad donate a day’s wages, with staff and supporters getting involved and giving what they can. The matchday raises in excess of £200,000 every season for The Arsenal Foundation.

BE A GUNNER. BE A RUNNER
The club’s annual fun run, Be a Gunner. Be a Runner sees supporters come together from around the world to raise money for The Arsenal Foundation. Hundreds take part at the flagship event at Emirates Stadium, with many thousands more participating across Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia and North America.

THE ARSENAL FOUNDATION BALL
Held at Emirates Stadium at the end of every season, The Arsenal Foundation Ball is the club’s flagship annual fundraiser. In 2014, the event raised over £325,000 to fund a number of projects which support young people. The event is supported each year by the first team squad and manager, with a series of celebrities and high profile supporters having generously given their time over the years to provide support for an excellent night of fundraising and fun.

ANNUAL STAFF PUB QUIZ
Arsenal employees annually come together for a night of competitive fun and fundraising in aid of The Arsenal Foundation. Hosted by television personality Dermot O’Leary, the night is a chance for employees to learn more about the work of the Foundation and fundraise.

THE ARSENAL CHARITY TEAM
Made up of former players and high profile supporters, the Arsenal charity team has been raising money for good causes since the 1980s.