# GIRFEC story of impact for project or programme

## Getting it right for Pitchin' In

## Introduction

Programmes like **Pitchin' In** offer a safe, structured environment where young people take part in tailored education support, life skills workshops and sport — all delivered from the setting of Rugby Park and The Killie Community Hub. Skills gained include a better understanding of mental health, healthy relationships, the impact of drugs and alcohol and future pathways. It is designed to support young people across Ayrshire who may be at risk of disengaging from school, facing exclusion, or becoming involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Working in close partnership with schools, local authorities and statutory services, they provide trusted mentoring and a positive alternative to harmful behaviour. The team builds strong, person-centred relationships that help each young person build confidence, self-worth, and a sense of belonging.

## The Context

D started in S1 at Secondary School, and we were aware of challenges within the home which impacted on school attendance and behaviour when at school. This included trauma and challenging home circumstances which Social Work were supporting the family with. D accumulated behaviour referrals within a short period of time and attendance had dropped significantly. There were also concerns about anti-social behaviour in the community. D made poor choices and could be argumentative and confrontational towards peers.

There was disengagement showing at an early stage in S1 and we offered support via our Stepping Stones provision which offers a safe space and enhanced supports.

## The Solution/ Approach

D thrives in settings that recognise and build upon determination and significantly benefitted from participation in this programme, as they respond strongly to consistent, positive adult role models.

As part of the **Pitchin' In** programme at Kilmarnock FC, we worked closely with D to support their engagement and promote positive participation. This involved collaborative planning between school staff, the Campus Police Officer and the programme facilitators to ensure D had consistent guidance throughout.

The success of the intervention relied on strong leadership from the school team, clear communication with club staff and the supportive structure provided by the programme itself.

Continuity of trusted adults was critical - particularly the presence of the Campus Police Officer, who's familiar and encouraging approach helped reduce barriers for D. The ultimate aim of the support was to build D's confidence, encourage regular attendance and provide a safe environment where they could engage positively in activities designed to develop social skills, resilience and a sense of belonging.

## Result/ Outcome

The strategy was implemented as a short-term intervention and successfully helped to improve D's physical fitness, build confidence and sustain positive engagement across the school, enabling them to experience greater success in a range of areas.

Their attendance at the sessions became more consistent and they were able to participate positively, which strengthened their sense of belonging and achievement. This had a wider benefit for their family, who reported increased optimism about D's progress. The impact also extended to the community, as the programme encouraged safety in the community, positive relationships between young people, the school and local partners, helping to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment.

### In terms of wellbeing indicators, D demonstrated improvements across several areas:

- **Safe:** Through the presence of trusted adults
- **Healthy:** By engaging in physical activity
- **Achieving:** By taking part in structured tasks
- **Nurtured and Included:** Through meaningful support and relationship building
- **Active and Responsible:** By contributing appropriately within the group.

Overall, the intervention improved D's readiness to engage in school life and strengthened the network of support around them.

## Testimonials/Quotes

Link to the programme and young person involved:

**Pitchin' In** *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmhI5LqSBcQ*

## Lessons Learnt

The football-based activities created a safe, motivating environment where the D felt confident and included.

The relationship-building aspect of the programme worked particularly well - coaches and staff provided consistent encouragement, which helped boost the D's self-esteem and sense of belonging.

Opportunities to work in a team helped the D practise social skills, communication and problem-solving in real-life situations.

The structured routines of the sessions supported D's ability to regulate emotions and manage transitions more effectively.

Collaborative working is essential. Strong links between school staff, families and community partners like Kilmarnock F.C. and Police Scotland lead to better outcomes for young people.

Policy frameworks such as GIRFEC reinforce the importance of early intervention and coordinated support - this programme demonstrated how effective community partnerships can be when the whole system works together.

Leadership that prioritises inclusion and youth development - evident in the club's approach - creates an environment where young people feel valued and able to experience success.

GIRFEC's emphasis on a holistic, child-centred approach ensured that support focused not only on skills but also on wellbeing, confidence and relationships.

## The SHANARRI indicators were supported through participation:

**Safe** – trusted adults and a positive environment promoted emotional safety.

**Healthy** – physical activity contributed to improved wellbeing.

**Achieving** – the young person experienced success through skill development and positive feedback.

**Nurtured** – supportive staff created a caring atmosphere.

**Active** – regular, structured participation encouraged engagement and routine.

**Respected** – the young person's voice was encouraged through choice and participation.

**Responsible** – opportunities to take on roles helped develop responsibility.

**Included** – being part of a team supported social inclusion and belonging.

## Our advice would be:

Build strong relationships - progress is greatest when young people feel understood, valued and supported.

Celebrate small successes to build confidence and motivation, especially for young people who may struggle in traditional learning settings.

Use GIRFEC to coordinate approaches and ensure everyone supporting the young person is working toward the same goals.

Stay flexible - programmes like **Pitchin' In** work best when adults adapt activities to the young person's strengths, interests and needs.

Encourage participation in community opportunities - connection with local clubs and organisations can broaden a young person's support network and enhance wellbeing.