

EMPIRE  
FIGHTING  
CHANCE

# THIS FIGHT IS **OUR** FIGHT

Our impact in 2022

“

**These sessions have saved Karrie. Since being attacked she would literally curl up in a ball and not do anything at all. Since having her 1-2-1 sessions she has grown stronger and found the confidence to start to go back out with her friends.**

Karrie's mum

”

“

**Whilst Bristol is a great place for so many people, there are tens of thousands who do not share this story. For too long we have ignored their voice, their story. As they help our city's marginalised young people fulfil their potential, Empire Fighting Chance are playing a critical role in building Bristol as a city of hope.**

Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol

”

“

**I don't see her as a coach, I just see her as a friend. But the stuff I talk to her about I can't talk about with my friends.**

Leaha

”



## CONTENTS

|   |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION.....                         | 4  | THE YEAR IN NUMBERS & OUR REACH.....          | 20 |
| WHO WE ARE .....                          | 6  | YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES.....                   | 22 |
| HOW IT WORKS.....                         | 8  | STRENGTHENING OUR SUPPORT.....                | 28 |
| IMPROVING QUALITY THROUGH PSYCHOLOGY..... | 10 | TRANSFORMING LIVES WITH THE OCTOBER CLUB..... | 32 |
| BOX CHAMPIONS.....                        | 12 | OUR LOYAL SUPPORTERS.....                     | 34 |
| BOX THERAPY.....                          | 14 | OUR FUTURE PLANS.....                         | 36 |
| BOX CAREERS.....                          | 16 | A FINAL MESSAGE FROM US.....                  | 38 |
| SCALING UP OUR IMPACT.....                | 18 |   |    |

# INTRODUCTION

We are proud to share our story of 2022. The year has been yet another challenging one. Just as the UK emerged from the global pandemic, the country lurched straight into a cost-of-living crisis. As more families were plunged into poverty, more young people struggled with their mental health and behavioural issues. We responded by raising our game. We upgraded our boxing and psychology-fused programmes, scaled these up to multiple new locations across the UK and strengthened our movement of organisations and individuals.

Empire Fighting Chance exists to fight the impact of poverty and inequality on the lives of young people. We have created a ground-breaking fusion of boxing and psychology to enable young people to overcome the adversity that they face and realise their unique potential. Our programmes seamlessly weave in psychologically informed support while young people box, using the sport as a platform for mentoring, therapy and careers coaching.

From our boxing gym in the heart of an inner-city neighbourhood in Bristol we have seen first-hand the damage inflicted by COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. Our waiting list in Bristol is the longest it has ever been, and we are seeing far more cases of trauma, self-harm and criminality. In South Wales the schools that we work alongside have been overwhelmed with the poor behaviour of their students, fuelled by a loss of routine and the habit of learning during the pandemic.

Our response to the crisis taking place in neighbourhoods up and down the country reflects our boxing heritage. We came out fighting, determined to increase our impact on young people's lives during these most difficult of times. Among other things, we:

- Strengthened the psychology that underpins our programmes to improve their quality
- Mobilised boxing clubs from across England to take our work into their communities
- Secured over £800k from The October Club to scale up our programmes over the next three years.

Our work is built upon collaboration. We are very grateful to all of the schools, NHS services, police forces, boxing clubs, supporters and other partners that we worked alongside this year to transform the lives of young people. We hope you enjoy reading our story of 2022.



# WHO WE ARE

Empire Fighting Chance was born on the streets of Bristol in 2006 to fight the destructive impact of poverty and inequality on the lives of young people. Rising from the renowned Empire Amateur Boxing Club, which has been based in inner-city Bristol since 1968, we have grown to become one of the UK's leading sport for development charities.



## WHO WE SUPPORT

Poverty and inequality pack a powerful punch. We fight for young people hit by their brutal effects. Most individuals we support have had multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), including violence, abuse and family breakdown. These traumatic events and the toxic conditions they battle on a daily basis mean that young people struggle with their mental health. The consequences can destroy young lives and include youth violence, exclusion from school, self-harm and unemployment. These young people face powerful barriers to obtaining mainstream support, resulting in issues escalating until they reach a point of personal crisis. Despite the challenging world that they have been born into, we have yet to meet a young person without talents to draw upon to change their life.

## WHAT WE DO

We fight the impact of poverty and inequality on the lives of young people. Our model features a powerful fusion of boxing and psychology, delivered by someone that young people can trust in a place where they feel safe, cared for and understood. Young people gain support in ways that are natural and enjoyable, encouraging them to turn up, relax, engage in the work and go on to make positive changes to their lives.

We achieve our mission in three ways:

- **We deliver:** we design and deliver programmes for young people that fuse boxing and psychology
- **We train:** we equip organisations and individuals with expertise to deliver our programmes in the communities in which they work
- **We fight:** we take what we learn from our work to decision makers and influencers and mobilise them to join our movement to build a better future for young people.

We have developed four programmes for young people:

- **Box Champions:** boxing fused with psychologically informed mentoring
- **Box Therapy:** boxing fused with a therapeutic intervention
- **Box Careers:** boxing fused with psychology and practical careers support
- **Box Juniors:** regular boxing sessions open to all young people, giving the alumni of our programmes the opportunity to continue their growth.

## OUR IMPACT

We reach over 5,000 young people each year across the United Kingdom. Our work gives young people skills, knowledge and inspiration to make positive changes to how they think and behave and to take steps to improve their lives. Young people improve their mental health, exit gangs, return to school, get work and go on to realise their unique potential.



**This programme has been life-changing for my son and our family. He has learnt strategies to channel his frustrations and anger and has become more confident about talking about his feelings.**

Parent



# HOW IT WORKS

Boxing is at the heart of our work and its most extraordinary feature. The sport has several natural qualities. Boxing's high-intensity training, for example, makes it uniquely placed to improve physiology. But a long time ago we recognised that the sport alone could not overcome the multiple and complex challenges that young people face. Over the years we have added and strengthened other features. The result is a scalable model for transforming young lives.

## BOXING

Our work is built around non-contact exercises for young people to learn how to box. Designed to improve fitness and boxing technique, our exercises include pad work, shadow boxing and skipping. As young people obtain support while participating in sport, our work overcomes the stigma associated with mainstream services. Instead of feeling ashamed for needing help, young people are proud to come to 'Empire'. Boxing has many other benefits that we harness, including that it:

- Attracts young people to our work and sustains their interest
- Improves physiology through releasing 'feel-good' chemicals
- Manages anger issues by providing a physical release
- Boosts self-belief through increasing fitness and mastery of a sport
- Presents us with natural gaps between exercises to provide support.

## PSYCHOLOGY

The support that we seamlessly weave into boxing is informed by the study of the mind and behaviour. Guided by our psychologist, we offer young people evidence-based psychological tools and techniques so that they can improve how they think and behave. We bring the theory to life by using boxing exercises and metaphors and work with young people to apply it to their individual lives.

## TRUSTED RELATIONSHIP

Young people will only listen to us if we have earned their trust. This can be challenging as their relationships with adults are often characterised by inconsistency, neglect and violence. Young people gain support from someone they can relate to and feel comfortable talking with – a young coach or therapist kitted out in tracksuit bottoms and an 'Empire hoodie'. Our staff use boxing to build rapport with young people and encourage them to relax, drop their guard and open up to us.

## CONNECTION

The location of our headquarters in the heart of an inner-city neighbourhood means we have a deep affinity with the young people we support. We understand why they would think and behave in the way that they do. So we do not judge, and instead look beyond what they have done and how they come across to see strengths, talents and remarkable young people. We are often told that young people like coming to us as 'they get me'.

## FAMILY

Young people enter into a space where they feel safe, supported and cared for. We create a friendly, relaxed environment where the mood is always positive. We are consistently present for young people when others cannot be. Like that of a good family, our support is unconditional, and we are always in their corner.

# IMPROVING QUALITY THROUGH PSYCHOLOGY

We are driven by a relentless pursuit of excellence. It is in our sporting DNA. Since we started out 16 years ago, we have not stopped searching for better ways to do things to increase our impact. This year we focused on strengthening the psychology that underpins our programmes. The psychology that we use is central to our success as it informs the tools and knowledge that we share with young people to transform their lives. We left 2022 with more effective programmes that are ripe for scaling up.

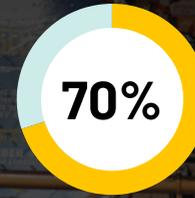


**If young people feel angry, they're constantly told they should be fixing their anger. We're there to say that feeling angry is perfectly normal, and in fact in some of your circumstances, we'd feel angry. Once you start normalising those feelings, you can see the weight being lifted from their shoulders.**

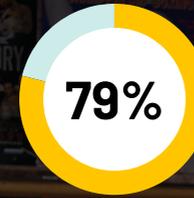
Sam Kotadia, Empire Fighting Chance Psychologist



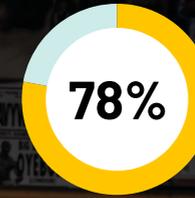
## YOUNG PEOPLE IMPROVED THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING:



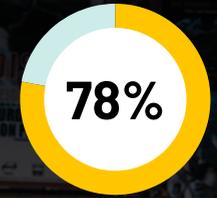
feel happier



feel more confident



feel fitter



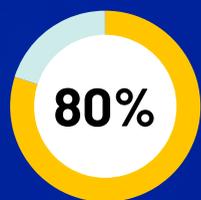
feel better about themselves



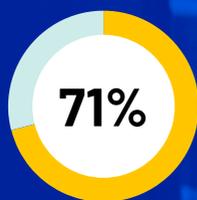
## REFINING

# BOX CHAMPIONS

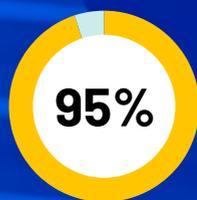
### YOUNG PEOPLE DEVELOPED POSITIVE ATTITUDES:



are more motivated

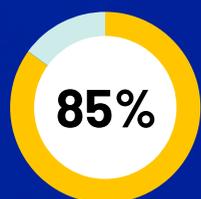


are more able to achieve their goals

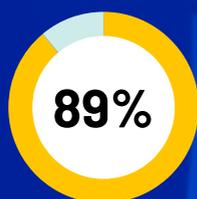


are more determined

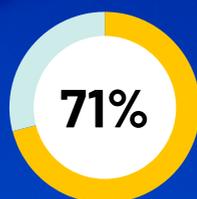
### YOUNG PEOPLE REDUCED THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN RISKY, ANTISOCIAL AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR:



are less likely to commit antisocial or criminal acts



are better behaved in school



are less likely to be part of a gang

### PSYCHOLOGICALLY INFORMED MENTORING

Our flagship programme features weekly sessions named after famous boxing champions, from Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Leonard to Anthony Joshua and Tyson Fury.

Facilitated by a coach - a youth worker and sports coach rolled into one - sessions are built around exercises for young people to learn how to box.

Exercises last for three minutes, the duration of a round in boxing. When the bell rings to signal time for a minute's rest, the coach uses the opportunity to mentor the young person, drawing upon evidence-based personal development principles about the nature of the mind. These serve to normalise feelings individuals are experiencing and equip them with expertise to manage emotions, behaviours and situations.

### POLISHING THE PSYCHOLOGY

During 2022 we worked with our psychologist to sharpen our personal development principles and build our coaches' capacity to apply them to the specific challenges that a young person is experiencing. Examples of our principles include:

#### GOING WITH THE FLOW

which teaches us that fighting negative emotions makes us feel more stressed and by leaving them alone our mind will return to a clear and healthy state

#### FEEL THE FEAR

which teaches us that to overcome difficult feelings we must not run from them but rather accept and confront them

#### ACTION NOT OUTCOME

which teaches us to break down our goals, which can often feel out of reach, into smaller targets or actions that are within our control.

“

**I felt safe at Empire Fighting Chance. It was also a place to let all my frustration and anger out. I pushed myself more than I have done before in other areas of my life and always left the gym feeling happier. I feel a lot more confident, and I have started talking to my mum more because of it.**

Mia, 13

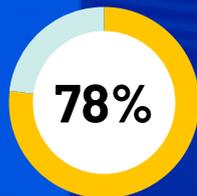
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## In 2022...

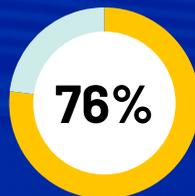
2,113 young people participated in our refined Box Champions programme, giving them the opportunity to improve their mental health and behaviour, build healthier relationships and achieve other positive changes.

ELEVATING

# BOX THERAPY



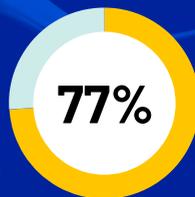
improved relationships with their families



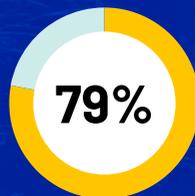
of parents saw a positive difference in their child



improved their mental wellbeing



are more likely to tell people how they are feeling



feel calmer

## In 2022...

304 young people participated in our upgraded Box Therapy programme, enabling them to improve how they manage their emotions, reduce negative behaviours and take steps to improve their lives.

## KNOCKING DOWN BARRIERS

Our trailblazing programme sees a qualified therapist seamlessly weave therapy into a boxing session. We developed Box Therapy to knock down the barriers young people face in accessing specialist mental health support. It takes mental health services out of clinics and into communities. By participating in sport in a boxing gym, young people access therapy in a way that is enjoyable and builds trust between them and their therapist, which is the key to unlocking therapeutic change.

## ADOPTING ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

In 2022 we elevated Box Therapy to a new level by embedding Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) into the programme. We chose ACT for its suitability for young people experiencing disadvantage. ACT helps people to cope with challenges and stress by developing their 'psychological flexibility'. This means holding thoughts and feelings that come into our minds more lightly rather than struggling against them, and instead acting on what is important to us - our values.

We created a library of exercises that use boxing to take young people through ACT's six principles and our therapists support them in using these in their daily lives. Examples of our exercises include:

### SURF THE URGE

which uses boxing exercises for young people to develop skills to act on impulses not in the heat of the moment but rather in a way that is in line with the kind of person they want to be

### SLOW-MOTION BOXING

which communicates the value of becoming attuned to the here and now through participants performing boxing exercises as slowly as possible

### SKIPPING ROPE TUG-OF-WAR

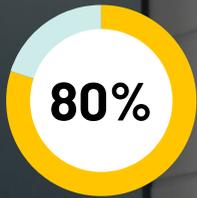
which uses a game to help young people to drop their struggle with anxiety and other difficult feelings.



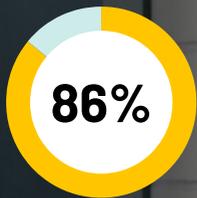
**We blend boxing and therapy to give young people tools to use in their day-to-day life to promote their health and wellbeing. Young people gain support within a safe, explorative and free environment. We place the young person at the centre of our work, putting choice and decision making into their hands so that our support is relevant, and they become more self-aware and independent.**

Simone Retief, Boxing Therapist





**80%**  
are more positive about their future career



**86%**  
are clearer on what career path to take



**90** individuals earned one or more qualifications through us



**58** individuals progressed into employment, training or further education

## In 2022...

110 young people participated in our enhanced Box Careers programme, helping them on their journey into work and a healthier, brighter future.

## ENHANCING

# BOX CAREERS

### SHIFTING ATTITUDES

The young people we work with are not ready to make use of the practical careers support on offer from mainstream employability providers. Most individuals arrive at our doors desperately short on self-esteem, motivation and aspiration. Box Careers focuses on shifting young people's attitudes towards themselves and their future. Boxing is the key to this. By mastering a sport and improving physical and mental health, young people improve their confidence, develop more positive attitudes and become open to new opportunities.

### INTRODUCING PSYCHOLOGY

In 2022, to complement the benefits of boxing, we introduced psychology into our careers programme. Careers coaches seamlessly weave psychologically informed personal development principles into boxing sessions to challenge and inspire young people to think differently about themselves and their future. Examples include:

### THE GROWTH MINDSET

which teaches young people that there is always an opportunity for growth and we can choose how to write our future

### THE HAPPINESS MYTH

which helps young people to discover what career will make them happy

### COMFORT ZONES

which encourages young people to push themselves beyond their comfort level in order to grow and enjoy better lives.

Young people become more motivated, feel a greater sense of purpose and develop higher aspirations. They are then ready to benefit from our practical careers support, which includes careers guidance, signposting to employment opportunities, sports-based qualifications and our 'Heavyweight Hustle' enterprise programme.

# SCALING UP OUR IMPACT

Our programmes present towns and cities across the UK with a proven solution to fight poor mental health and youth violence. We are bringing our solution to young people experiencing disadvantage through a network of boxing clubs and other local organisations powered by Empire Fighting Chance. In 2022 we worked alongside England Boxing to train our first 15 amateur boxing clubs to deliver our programmes to young people in their communities across eight regions of the country.

## BENEFITS OF BOXING CLUBS

Boxing clubs are often based in economically deprived neighbourhoods, have credibility in their local area and offer the perfect setting to deliver our boxing-based programmes. Most boxing clubs are already improving young people's lives by giving them the opportunity to participate in sport and providing help and support informally. We present boxing clubs with the opportunity to take what they currently do to a whole new level and follow our lead in transforming their local communities. We are working alongside England Boxing, the national governing body for the amateur sport of boxing, who oversee nearly 1,000 affiliated boxing clubs.

## TRAINING BOXING CLUBS

Alongside England Boxing we select boxing clubs ready for scaling up their social programmes and who meet our robust criteria. Our process starts with a visit to their club and community. Those selected send their key personnel on a two-day training course at the Empire Gym with a cohort of other boxing clubs. Clubs learn how we transitioned from an amateur boxing club into a sustainable charity and about all aspects of our organisation, including our programmes, operations, sales and monitoring and evaluation. This year we welcomed boxing clubs from County Durham, Dudley, Hampshire, Liverpool, Macclesfield, Manchester, Newcastle, Newquay, Northampton, Norwich, Plymouth, Rotherham, Sheffield, St Helens and Surrey.

## TRANSFORMING YOUNG LIVES IN MANCHESTER

In March, staff from Manchester's historic Collyhurst and Moston Amateur Boxing Club joined our first training course. They travelled back home inspired and, shortly after, tailored our Box Champions programme for the young people in their local area. They are now working in 11 schools across Greater Manchester, supporting 250 young people each week. We have been so impressed with the club's progress and will continue to support their development in the future.

## FAR-REACHING SUPPORT

After their training, each boxing club receives ongoing support from our Growth and Development Manager, whose role is dedicated to their success. They also benefit from visits from our psychologist and other experts, resources to help them to deliver our work and refresher training. Clubs use our support to adapt and deliver our programmes for young people in their communities and create the infrastructure to successfully manage and sustain them. Clubs become members of a national network of clubs who are fighting for change in their communities and sharing their best practice.



**What Empire has shared with us has been unbelievable; we're looking forward to changing the lives of more young people in our community.**

Joe Harding, Epsom Boxing Academy



# THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

In 2022 we reached

**5,125** young people

We supported

**3,227** young people ourselves

We trained boxing clubs and other partners to support

**1,898** young people

## OUR REACH

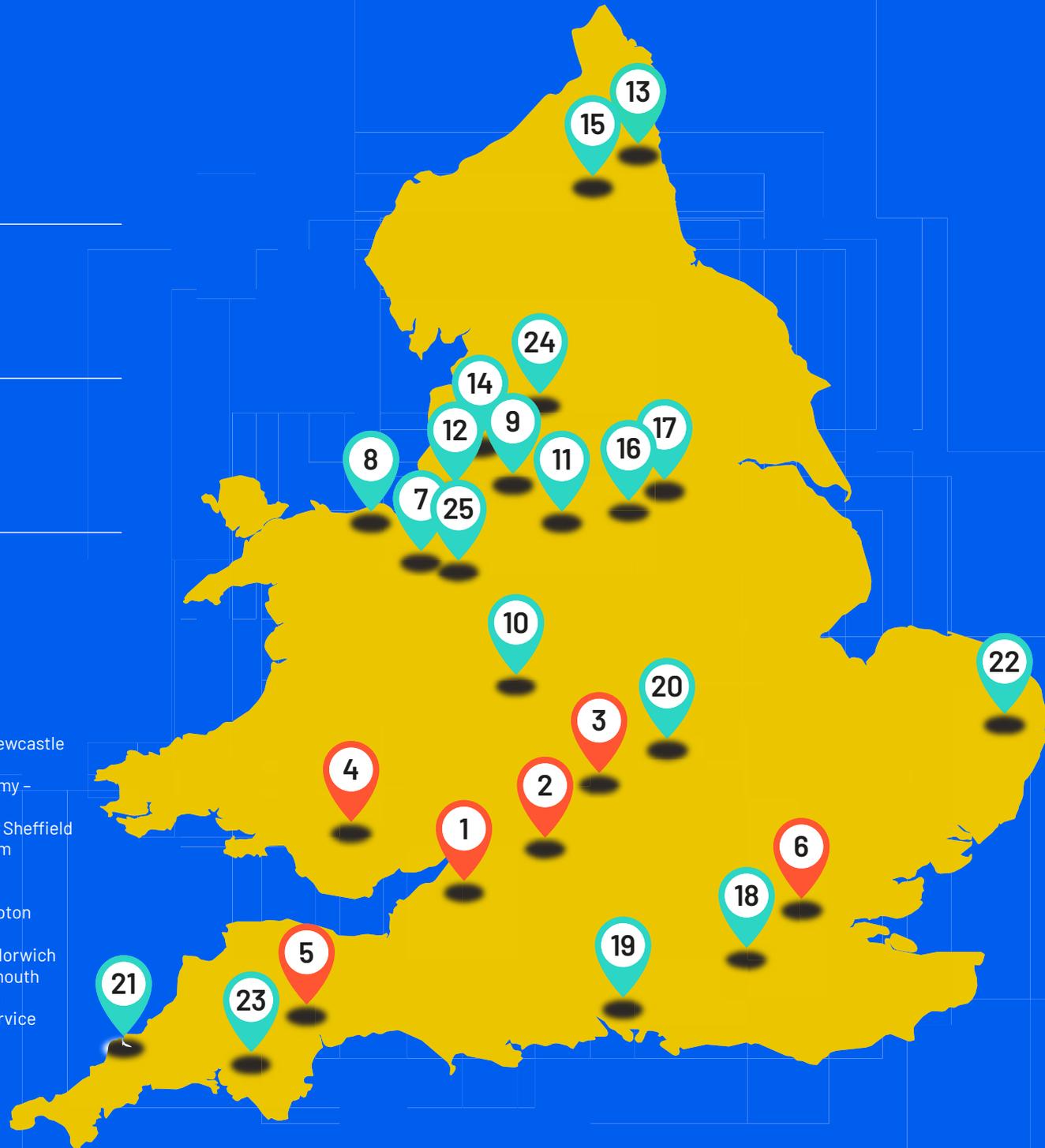
### DIRECT DELIVERY SITES

1. Bristol
2. South Gloucestershire
3. Gloucestershire
4. South Wales
5. Exeter City FC
6. Watford FC Community Trust

### PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

7. Aura Sports Development and Active Wrexham
8. West Rhyl Young People's Project
9. Collyhurst and Moston ABC - Manchester
10. Priory Park ABC - Dudley
11. Macclesfield Boys Boxing Club

12. Lee Jones ABC - Liverpool
13. Fight Fitness Guru ABC - Newcastle
14. Wildcard ABC - St Helens
15. Seconds Out Boxing Academy - County Durham
16. Brendan Ingle Foundation - Sheffield
17. Millennium ABC - Rotherham
18. Epsom Boxing Academy
19. Eastleigh ABC
20. Team Shoe-Box - Northampton
21. Newquay Boxing Academy
22. Broadside Warriors ABC - Norwich
23. Legends Boxing Gym - Plymouth
24. Technique ABC - Blackburn
25. Wrexham Youth Justice Service



# YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES



# GEORGE'S STORY

**George, 16, was involved in knife crime, gangs and violent behaviour. He was caught by the police carrying a knife, which led to an impending court case. He was regularly using drugs and drinking heavily. George's violent outbursts led him to be excluded from his school and moved to a Pupil Referral Unit.**

George was referred to Empire Fighting Chance by his school to help him to reintegrate into mainstream education. George was paired with our one of our coaches, who used boxing and the safe environment of our gym to gain his trust. George became very honest about how he was feeling and the trouble he was involved in. He told his coach that the death of his brother had affected him badly and that he struggled with substances when trying to escape his low moods.

“

**I always felt welcome when I set foot in the gym, and I was made to feel like part of the Empire family.**

George

”

We worked with George to help him to embrace his difficult emotions and understand that they are not a problem that needs fixing. The weight lifted off his shoulders. We supported George in living with his emotions without them overwhelming him or pushing him to drugs, alcohol and violence. George took what he learnt from our gym and started to get into trouble less often.

The school was pleased with George's progress and he remains in mainstream education. George has continued to come to our gym and has built relationships with several coaches.

# BECCI'S STORY

**Becci, 14, experienced trauma, depression and anxiety and was known to self-harm. She was attacked by a group of around 40 girls from her school and suffered head injuries, which led to a police inquiry. Becci's family were also being harassed by her older brother's former gang.**

On one occasion the gang came to Becci's home armed with baseball bats and crowbars. Becci's anxiety grew and she started having panic attacks. She refused to leave the house, stopped attending school and locked herself away in her room.

“

**There has been such a difference in her since attending. I have noticed over the weeks how much her confidence has grown. She is much happier and has started to go out with her friends.**

Becci's mum

”

Becci joined our Box Champions programme and was paired with one of our coaches. Becci quickly embraced boxing and, through the regular exercise, started becoming more confident. Becci reached the point where she could leave her house on her own and then return to school.

Almost every week Becci would discuss a difficult situation with her coach, such as the suicide of a friend and a family bereavement. Our work focused on building Becci's resilience to deal with these challenges. Becci learnt to become comfortable sitting with difficult emotions and not bottling them up. Becci became an increasingly strong young woman. Rather than return to locking herself away in her bedroom, Becci chose to confront issues and embrace life again.

# TROY'S STORY

**Troy, 11, was experiencing depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. His attendance at school was inconsistent, he behaved poorly in class and he struggled with friendships. He has a tumultuous home life - his father's poor mental health resulted in outbursts directed towards him, while his older brother was often suicidal and could be aggressive.**

When Troy started his Box Champions programme, he quickly took to boxing. His coach, Matt, stressed the importance of our personal development principle 'Awesome Exercise' to communicate to Troy the mental and physical health benefits of exercise. Troy became aware of how his mood would improve during and after exercise and how the sport was successfully channelling his anger.



**I can't praise his time with Empire enough. His confidence has grown over the weeks: he is a much happier child, seems to be more settled and is nowhere near as aggressive. I think the relationship he has built up with his coach has been a big factor in this; they have a great bond.**

Troy's mum



Troy shared with Matt that he constantly worries about the people around him and struggled with other difficult feelings. We used our personal development principle 'No Wrong Feelings' for Troy to understand that trying to push negative feelings away would only lead to him becoming more stressed. Instead, Troy learnt to accept negative feelings and to let them pass.

# RUBY'S STORY

**Ruby, 19, was experiencing bouts of depression owing to problems at home. Ruby lives with her mum, who was ill. Her dad often disappeared for months at a time. Ruby found it hard to manage her emotions, which led to disengagement from college. Her college was concerned about Ruby and referred her to Empire Fighting Chance.**

Ruby was very nervous when she first entered our gym. As her weekly sessions progressed with coach Chris, Ruby slowly became more comfortable and started to enjoy boxing. Thriving in a new environment helped Ruby see that she could overcome obstacles. We worked on Ruby's 'Growth Mindset', helping her realise her potential to develop, and that success with her A Levels and a future career was possible.

Ruby had plans to study wildlife management at university. Chris worked with Ruby on her application and student finance plan to map out what she needed. While on the Box Careers programme, Ruby was successful in her application for a part-time job at a local restaurant and credits the skills she learnt with Empire Fighting Chance as being transferable to her new workplace.

Despite not getting the grades she needed for her preferred university, she used the personal development principles from her sessions and persevered to get onto an environmental management course at the University of the West of England.



**Empire have helped me in so many ways. From helping me with a CV to helping me feel better about myself. I feel happier at home and now use exercise as an escape and coping method. I would say to someone who wants to come to Empire that they should 100% do it.**

Ruby



## STRENGTHENING OUR SUPPORT

Many of the young people that we see have few individuals in their lives who can help them to navigate their way through childhood and adolescence. Instead, they might be experiencing conflict with their families, lack positive role models or be involved with gangs and others who are a bad influence. This year we stepped up our efforts to build a stronger network around young people so that they have more people fighting in their corner.

### OUR AWESOME TEAM

In 2022 we developed an even stronger team of coaches and therapists to support young people. We have learnt that to be successful agents of change, they must possess three crucial talents – credibility among young people, listening skills and the ability to build a trusted relationship. Our team have all of this and more in abundance. Many members of our team have lived experience of the issues that our work tackles and use their personal stories as inspiration for young people.

### INVOLVING FAMILIES

We recognise the influential role parents and carers play in the lives of young people. Our Family Liaison Team reaches out to the parents/carers of every young person who joins our programme when it is practical to do so. We gain their commitment to our work, offer light-touch practical and emotional support and help to create healthier relationships at home. This vital work improves young people's attendance and punctuality during the programme and sustains its benefits after they leave.



“

**Ella-Mae has stopped self-harming totally over the last two months. As a mother, to have to sit and watch her self-harm knowing there is nothing I can do to stop her has been one of the hardest things for me to go through. Now when she is angry Ella-Mae will take all of her frustration out on the punchbags instead of herself. It has been amazing for her.**

Ella-Mae's mum

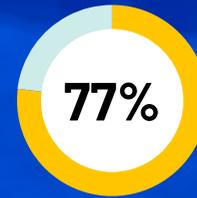
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## WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

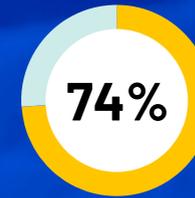
We also recognise the central role that schools play in young people's development, and so our work strives to increase their engagement with education. During 2022 we delivered our programmes for 94 schools, improving their students' behaviour and attendance and their attitude towards learning and education. We also increased our interaction with schools through recruiting our first Schools Liaison Officer. Schools pay for our services and 88% of them retain us, demonstrating the value that they place on our work.

## CULTIVATING PEER SUPPORT

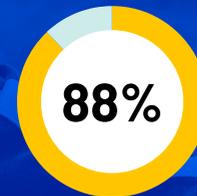
We increased our use of small groups to deliver our three programmes. These provide young people with opportunities to make new friends, mix with different people and draw on inspiration and practical support from their peers. We also expanded the use of apprentice coaches, who are alumni of our programmes. For six months they work alongside our coaches to assist with the delivery of Box Champions. Apprentices draw on their own experiences to offer their peers relevant support and positive role modelling. In return, they gain vital skills and experience to help with their career progression.



**of parents saw an improvement in their child's behaviour**



**improved their behaviour at school, according to teachers**



**of parents said that Box Champions made a positive difference to their child**



**of parents would recommend Box Champions to other parents**

**“ Simon (not real name) has had fewer Fixed Term Exclusions, has a renewed sense of self-confidence and has become less volatile in the school setting. The main focus has been on giving Simon an intrinsic sense of self-worth and drive to achieve in his life outside of academia. It has helped him settle more in unstructured times and made him less reactive. ”**

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School

# TRANSFORMING LIVES WITH THE OCTOBER CLUB

In May 2022 we were chosen as the charity of the year for city-based philanthropy group The October Club. A team from Empire Fighting Chance visited the House of Commons for the launch event in June. In October over 350 individuals attended their main fundraising event, the prestigious Savoy Dinner. In total, The October Club raised an incredible £820,000 for Empire Fighting Chance to increase our impact across the UK.

Our partnership with The October Club has generated a transformational amount of funding for the charity. We are using it over the next three years to build a network of local boxing clubs to deliver our programmes in their communities. Our aim is to reach 15,000 young people each year through 25 trained amateur boxing clubs.

One of our young members of staff was instrumental in our success. Kassia Humphries became our Fundraising Intern shortly after completing our Box Champions programme.

Kassia made remarkable progress during our programme. This inspired her to help others by telling her story and promoting our work. Kassia helped to secure The October Club partnership by speaking eloquently and passionately at our pitch to their committee. She was once again outstanding on the night of the fundraiser, inspiring people to dig deep into their pockets. It was, we were told, one of the best talks in The October Club's 35-year history. Kassia received a well-deserved standing ovation.



**When we met with Empire Fighting Chance and heard about their ethos, we knew it would be a charity that would bring about impactful change with our funding. I saw first-hand the amazing work they do every day. We have a long history of supporting smaller charities with ambitious projects, so we are really looking forward to seeing Empire Fighting Chance reach thousands more young people with their unique and life-changing programmes.**

Henry Knapman, Chair of The October Club



# OUR LOYAL SUPPORTERS

We recognise that the extraordinary events of recent years have meant that many of our supporters are facing tough times. This has made the generosity of the various funders, companies and individuals who have chosen to support our work even more humbling. Our wonderful supporters enabled us to post a record income for the year to help us respond to the growing need among young people for our work.



## IN CONVERSATION WITH MARVIN REES AND ALEX BERESFORD

In February we brought together businesses from across Bristol for an event at The Mansion House. Empire Fighting Chance Ambassadors Marvin Rees and Alex Beresford joined our CEO Martin Bisp for a panel discussion hosted by ITV's Kylie Pentelow about building Bristol as a city of hope. Bristol Mayor Marvin and TV personality Alex both spoke movingly about their experiences growing up in Bristol and how they believe our work with young people is helping to build a city of hope.

## CORPORATE GOLF DAYS

Two of our long-term corporate supporters – Mobius Works and The Pasco Group & Subway 'Bristol and West' – held successful golf days in aid of Empire Fighting Chance. Despite the torrential rain, The Pasco Group raised a fantastic £9,000 for our work. We were back on the fairway a couple of weeks later for Mobius's Golf Day, where local legend Joe Sims hosted the auction, helping Mobius raise almost £4,000!

## WELCOMING NEW PARTNERS

We welcomed several new partners this year, including Dick Lovett Group and RedRock Consulting. Dick Lovett Group have not only been supporting our Box Careers programme but also donated a fabulous auction prize that generated £2,000 for the charity. RedRock also have ambitious plans to support our careers programme and have already made a corporate donation and raised £900 in their first fundraising activity.

## GLOVES ARE OFF QUIZ

This year our annual quiz was back as we knew it – in person and together again. We were so grateful to our fantastic host, Geoff Twentyman, event sponsors Anderson Financial Management and Mobius Works, and everyone who attended. Together we raised an incredible £15,000 to transform young lives.

## RUNNING FOR EMPIRE

We are grateful to everyone who took on the Bristol 10K, Bristol Half Marathon, Bath Half Marathon and many other running events across the year. A special shout-out to Sarah Dawson who ran an impressive three half marathons in four weeks, raising a massive £1,892, and to the eight members of the Artworks team who took on the Cotswold Way Ultra Challenge, walking 53km in one day, and raising an incredible £3,698.15 to support our work.

## FABULOUS FUNDERS

We are immensely grateful for the support of the following trusts and foundations during this past year: Children in Need, Comic Relief, Dulverton Trust, Esmée Fairburn Foundation, Fidelity Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Greggs Foundation, Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner, Henry Smith Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Newby Trust, Nisbet Trust, The October Club, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Postcode Community Trust, Société Générale, St James's Place, Stone Family Foundation, Tuixen Foundation, West of England Combined Authority and Youth Endowment Fund.

# OUR FUTURE PLANS

2023 is the 10-year anniversary of our status as a charity. We are at a critical point in our history. We have developed and evidenced a model to fight poor mental health and youth violence. We have successfully piloted a solution to bring its benefits to neighbourhoods across the UK through a network of boxing clubs. With wind in our sails, we can roll out our solution. By 2025 we aim to reach tens of thousands of young people across the UK each year. We have four priorities to guide us towards our vision during the year ahead.

## 1. INCREASE OUR FOOTPRINT THROUGH BOXING CLUBS

We will continue to work in partnership with England Boxing to train and support amateur boxing clubs to deliver our work in their towns and cities. We will also start identifying suitable boxing clubs to partner with in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.

## 2. DEVELOP AND SCALE UP BOX THERAPY

We will further develop and promote Box Therapy such that it is widely considered by mental health specialists to be a credible therapeutic approach. We will scale up our programme through training professionals across the country to become accredited Boxing Therapists.

## 3. AMPLIFY OUR INFLUENCE

We will take a more focused approach to how we mobilise decision makers and influencers to improve young lives. We will fight for a small number of changes we want to see using young people's voices, improved communications and more robust evidence to prove the efficacy of our work.

## 4. TAKE OUR FIGHT GLOBALLY

In 2022 we were proud to be invited to participate in the '17 Rooms' global initiative to stimulate action towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. We joined a working group focused on tackling urban violence, which plans to pilot a unified approach to tackling violence in several cities across the world, in which we expect Bristol to be included.



# A FINAL MESSAGE FROM US

Thank you to everyone who has supported the work of Empire Fighting Chance in 2022. We are very grateful to the many supporters, partners, volunteers, parents and young people who have helped to make our achievements possible during this past year. We look forward to continuing to work alongside all of you in 2023 and have an even greater impact on the lives of young people.



For more information, call 0117 233 8700

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