

Aston Villa Football Club

In partnership with Birmingham Careers Hub

Reach
Quality
Targeting
Sustainability



Aston Villa Football Club is a Cornerstone Employer supporting Birmingham Careers Hub, along with EY, Lendlease, Willmott Dixon, Jacobs, and Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust.

Our primary motivation in becoming a Cornerstone Employer was to support young people in our three constituent areas, Perry Barr, Erdington and Ladywood.

We regularly engage with thousands of young people across the city of Birmingham through our school and community work – but we felt we needed to do more to bridge the gap between engagement through to education and ultimately employment, particularly as a high percentage of participants are young people who are struggling in mainstream education or come from disadvantaged communities where there is very little guidance on educational and employment opportunities.

We directly employ ten apprentices a year, and our careers and education programmes regularly impact hundreds of young people, providing them the skills and appropriate signposting information to pursue a career of their choice.

The education and learning hat-trick

Our Education and Learning Programme is made up of three elements:

- Alternative Provision: targeting young people at risk of exclusion from mainstream education (year 9-11)
- Football and Education: two-year post 16 educational course providing skills for employment in the football industry or a pathway into further education

- Careers Advice: using the football club as a model we have linked with neighbouring primary and secondary schools to talk about the career opportunities that exist across the football club and not just the eleven players who take the field on a match day.

We chose these initiatives because we felt it was a priority for the sector. Through our engagement programmes we could evidence a lack of awareness amongst young people of the education and employment pathways available to them.

Topping the table for careers support

The main aim of our programmes is to provide a pathway for young people to stay in education or develop the skills to gain employment. We lead on all our initiatives, but we work closely with our key educational partners across both the Alternative Provision and Football and Education programmes.

Alternative Provision works on a referral system and targets approximately 40 young people each year. Our Football and Education programme is much bigger and targets 120 year 12 and 13 pupils and is an open application process, although we do target young people from our constituent wards and those who may be struggling to access other educational opportunities.

Our Careers Advice programme is much broader and links in with other employers across the Football Club including Levy Hospitality, Serves Security and Clean Serve. We also link in with employers around Villa Park so we can disseminate employment information to our young people through our engagement programmes. An example of this would be working with the local Tesco branch to identify casual work as and when it is available and signposting our young people to those employment opportunities.

Kicking goals: Zaki's story

Zaki moved to England from Italy at the age of 15. His English language skills were limited and subsequently found it hard for him to communicate with other people. Through a friend he was told about the Aston Villa Kicks Programme and how the helpful coaches would be understanding of his English skills and allow him to partake in his local session.

Being part of Kicks raised Zaki's confidence and contributed to the development of his English and wider communication skills.

Zaki attended 194 Kicks sessions during the delivery period of 2015-2016-2017-2018. He also volunteered at 3 sessions (Laurel Road, Aston Park and Heartlands Academy). While engaged on the Kicks project Zaki gained the following qualifications:

- Multi Skills
- Ball Familiarisation
- Coaching the Whole Child
- Tennis Activator

Kicks provided Zaki with the opportunity to engage in personal development courses which ultimately would form a vital part of his journey into employment. Through his engagement in Kicks, Zaki was able to apply for a Pre-Apprenticeship course through the Foundation. Zaki was recruited onto the course in January and over the next eight weeks successfully completed qualifications in Functional English and Maths, Employability and Sports Leadership. Such was his dedication and commitment to the eight weeks that Zaki was offered one of five Apprenticeship roles working on an inter-generational Health and Well-being programme called Generation Gains.

Zaki will now be employed by the Aston Villa Foundation for the next two years. He is excelling in his new role and he is delivering on a range of projects across the Foundation. In his spare time Zaki plays for Aston Villa Football and Education programme team and also plays for Alvechurch FC. Zaki said he would tell more people about his experience on the project and he hopes to gain more qualifications in the field of coaching development and further his career in sport.



We're on young people's team

'Buy-in' from young people remains one of the biggest challenges. We work in some of the most deprived wards across the country and find ourselves working with young people who are the furthest away from the employment market. The fight against low level crime and more significantly County Lines remains our biggest challenge, particularly when there is a perception that these activities can provide short term rewards despite the long-term risk.

Success, for us, is having good relationships with young people in the area through our engagement programme. Our top tip for employers engaging with young people would be to aim to build trust. Focusing on this means participants respond well to our initiatives. We are lucky that we have access to so many young people through our programmes.

The Careers & Enterprise Company

2-7 Clerkenwell Green

Clerkenwell

London EC1R 0DE

careersandenterprise.co.uk