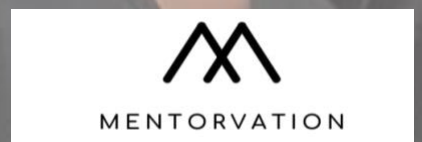


Impact & Mental Health Report



Mentorvation would like to thank all stakeholders, sponsors and the community for support these projects this year, we aim to continue building on this work for the benefit of our wider community. The young people would also like to thank Winston Goode and Winston Rollock for their ongoing support and contributions to the projects.

Mental Health in Young Black Boys in the UK: Challenges, Realities, and Pathways to Support

Mental health is a critical component of overall well-being, yet young black boys in the UK face unique challenges that can significantly affect their mental health. Systemic racism, socio-economic disparities, cultural stigma, and a lack of representation in mental health professions all contribute to these challenges. This essay explores the multifaceted issues affecting the mental health of young black boys in the UK, supported by relevant literature and examples, while also suggesting pathways to provide better support.

Systemic Racism and Mental Health

Systemic racism deeply influences the mental health of young black boys in the UK. Research from the Runnymede Trust highlights how racial discrimination and prejudice are prevalent in various sectors, including education, housing, and criminal justice system (Runnymede Trust, 2020). These pervasive forms of discrimination create environments where young black boys constantly face marginalization and bias, which can have detrimental effects on their mental health.

In the educational sector, black students often experience a lack of representation in the curriculum and are subjected to lower expectations from teachers, which can affect their self-esteem and academic performance. The Department for Education's statistics show that black Caribbean pupils are three times more likely to be excluded from school than their white peers (DfE, 2019). This disproportionate exclusion is not only punitive but also alienating, contributing to feelings of rejection and low self-worth. Exclusion from school can disrupt their education trajectory, leading to long-term negative impacts on both their mental health and future opportunities.

Moreover, these exclusions can increase the risk of interaction with the criminal justice system, a phenomenon known as the "school-to-prison pipeline." According to the Prison Reform Trust, black individuals are disproportionately represented in the UK prison population, and early school exclusion is a significant predictor of future incarceration (Prison Reform Trust, 2019). This pathway underscores how systemic racism in education can extend into other areas of life, compounding stress and anxiety.

Beyond the classroom, young black boys also encounter racial profiling and discriminatory practices by the police. The Home Office data reveals that black people are nine times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police compared to white people (Home Office, 2020). These encounters can be traumatising, fostering a sense of injustice and fear that permeates their daily lives. The cumulative effect of these experiences can lead to chronic stress, a key factor in the development of mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Furthermore, systemic racism manifests in the form of economic disparities that disproportionately affect black families. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports that 40% of black households in the UK live in poverty, which is double the rate of white households (JRF, 2020). Economic hardship often correlates with living in deprived areas with limited access to quality healthcare, education, and recreational facilities. These environments can increase exposure to violence and crime, further exacerbating stress and mental health issues. Chronic exposure to

these stressors can lead to a higher prevalence of mental health issues like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and conduct disorders.

Research also indicates that the constant exposure to racism and microaggressions can have a cumulative impact on mental health, known as "racial battle fatigue." A study by the Centre for Mental Health found that experiences of racism can lead to a state of constant vigilance and anxiety, which significantly impacts the mental health of young black individuals (Centre for Mental Health, 2018). This chronic stress can manifest in physical symptoms such as headaches, high blood pressure, and sleep disturbances, further illustrating the profound effect of systemic racism on overall health.

Systemic racism in the UK is a pervasive issue that significantly impacts the mental health of young black boys. The cumulative effect of discrimination in education, criminal justice system, and economic opportunities creates a hostile environment that fosters stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Addressing these systemic issues is crucial for improving the mental health and well-being of young black boys in the UK. This requires comprehensive anti-racist policies, increased representation, and targeted mental health support tailored to their unique experiences and challenges.

Cultural Stigma and Mental Health

Cultural stigma surrounding mental health is a significant barrier for young black boys. In many black communities, discussing mental health issues is often taboo, and seeking help can be seen as a sign of weakness or failure. This stigma is perpetuated by a lack of culturally competent mental health professionals who understand the unique experiences of black boys. Research by the British Psychological Society indicates that black people in the UK are more likely to be misdiagnosed or given inappropriate treatments due to cultural misunderstandings (BPS, 2018).

Pathways to Support

Addressing the mental health needs of young black boys in the UK requires a multi-faceted approach. Schools can play a pivotal role by providing supportive environments and implementing anti-racist policies. For instance, the Race Equality Foundation recommends training teachers in cultural competence and anti-racist practices, as well as hiring more black teachers and counsellors who can serve as role models and mentors (Race Equality Foundation, 2020). Additionally, schools should provide mental health education to reduce stigma and promote help-seeking behaviours.

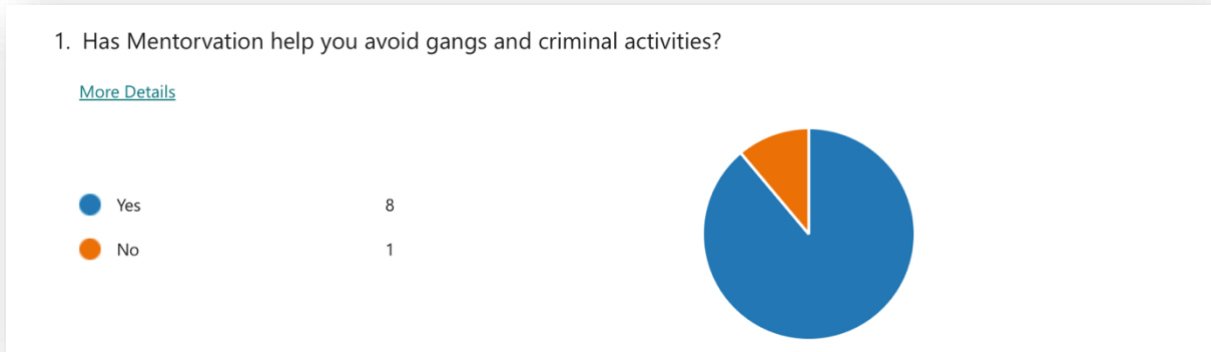
Community-based programs that offer mental health services in familiar and accessible settings can also make a significant difference. Initiatives such as the Black Thrive Lambeth project, which works to address the inequalities in mental health outcomes for black people, have shown promising results in improving mental health support (Black Thrive Lambeth, 2021). These programs emphasize the importance of community engagement and culturally appropriate services.

Furthermore, increasing funding for mental health research focused on black populations in the UK can help identify effective interventions tailored to their specific needs. Policymakers should also work to address the socio-economic disparities that contribute to mental health challenges, including investing in affordable housing, quality education, and economic opportunities for black families.

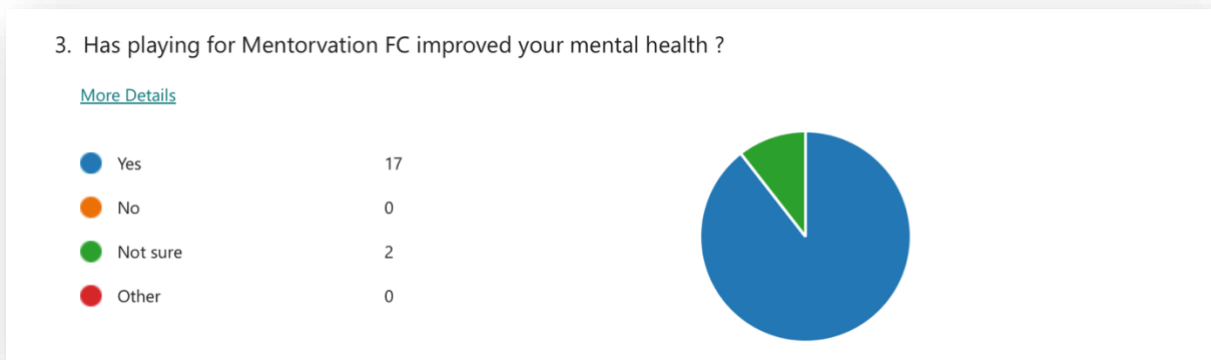
Gangs Crime and Mental Health

Data Youth Group

This data was collected throughout the year giving Mentorvation the required feedback to adjust their support and signposting of services. We observed the variance in rational between mental health and social issues around gangs and crime. Understanding that young people with positive mental health were less likely to be involved in negative or criminal behaviour.



This highlights the impact of the project is on gang and criminal activity in the young black boys group.



This highlights the impact the project is having on the mental health of the young black boys.



The Impact of Mental Health in Men: Leveraging Sports for Positive Change

Introduction:

Mental health remains a pressing concern, particularly among men, who often face barriers in acknowledging and addressing their emotional well-being. Despite progress in awareness, societal stigmas and traditional gender norms continue to impede men's willingness to seek help for mental health issues openly. However, emerging research and initiatives demonstrate the significant potential of sports, especially football, in promoting mental well-being among men. This article examines the UK-specific landscape of men's mental health, the role of sports in fostering positive outcomes, and the contributions of organisations like Mentorvation in tackling mental health challenges through football.

Mental health issues among men in the UK represent a significant public health concern, often exacerbated by societal pressures and stigma associated with seeking help. This comprehensive review aims to provide an extensive analysis of the impact of mental health on men in the UK, supported by recent statistics and scientific literature. Additionally, we will explore the innovative work of organisations like Mentorvation, which use football as a means to address and improve mental health in men.

The State of Men's Mental Health in the UK

Current Statistics:

Recent reports from the UK highlight the gravity of mental health challenges faced by men:

- **Suicide Rates:** Men are three times more likely to die by suicide compared to women, with men aged 40 to 49 having the highest suicide rates in the UK¹.
- **Therapy Referrals:** Only 36% of referrals to NHS talking therapies are for men, indicating a significant gender disparity in seeking help¹.
- **Substance Abuse:** Men are nearly three times more likely than women to become alcohol dependent, which is often linked to mental health issues².

Understanding the Mental Health Landscape for Men in the UK:

In the UK, men face a multitude of challenges related to mental health, compounded by societal pressures and gender expectations. According to the Mental Health Foundation, men are less likely than women to seek professional support for mental health concerns, with suicide rates notably higher among men across all age groups. Factors such as social isolation, unemployment, and relationship breakdowns contribute to the vulnerability of men's mental well-being.

Furthermore, research from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) highlights disparities in mental health outcomes between genders, with men more likely to experience substance abuse disorders and antisocial behaviour. Despite these alarming statistics, stigma and a reluctance to appear vulnerable often prevent men from accessing the necessary support and interventions.

The Role of Sports, Particularly Football, in Promoting Mental Well-being:

Engaging in sports, particularly football, offers a multifaceted approach to improving mental health outcomes for men in the UK. Football, as the nation's most popular sport, holds significant potential as a tool for fostering social connections, promoting physical activity, and addressing mental health concerns.

Research conducted by the University of Bristol and the Football Association (FA) has highlighted the positive impact of football on men's mental health. The 'Get Set to Go' initiative, supported by the FA and the mental health charity Mind, provides structured football sessions aimed at improving participants' mental well-being. The program emphasizes the importance of teamwork, camaraderie, and physical activity in enhancing mood and reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Mentorvation: Using Football to Tackle Mental Health Challenges:

Mentorvation, is a London based organisation, exemplifies the power of football in addressing mental health issues among men. Through its innovative partnership with AFC Kumazi Strikers FC, Mentorvation harnesses the passion for football to create supportive environments where men can openly discuss their mental health struggles and access appropriate support. Engagement in sports, particularly football, has been shown to have a multitude of benefits for mental health. Physical activity is associated with reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, and can serve as a powerful tool for social connection and emotional support.

Case Studies: Football and Mental Health

Case studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of football-based interventions in improving mental health outcomes. For instance, the 'Coping Through Football' project has used football as a therapeutic tool for individuals with severe mental health difficulties, leading to positive changes in their well-being. Case study in Appendix if you want to view it [click here](#)

UK Statistics and Literature Supporting the Link:

Recent studies conducted in the UK further reinforce the positive association between sports participation and men's mental health. A report by Sport England found that men who regularly participated in sports reported higher levels of life satisfaction and well-being compared to those who were inactive. Additionally, research published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine highlighted the role of team sports, including football, in promoting social connectedness and improving mental health outcomes for men.



Mentorvation's Contribution

Mentorvation have recognized the potential of sports, specifically football, in tackling men's mental health issues. By creating community spaces where men can connect and engage in football, these initiatives provide a supportive environment that encourages open discussion about mental health and fosters a sense of belonging.

FC Kumazi Partnership

KS (AFC Kumazi Strikers), a long-standing community-based football club with a proud 25-year history, has recognised the pressing need to address mental health issues among men in their community. Understanding the pivotal role that sports, particularly football, can play in promoting mental well-being, KS has embarked on a ground breaking partnership with Mentorvation to establish two teams dedicated to supporting men's mental health.

The first team, aptly named the "Vet's" side, comprises men aged 35 and upwards. Recognising that middle-aged and older men often face unique mental health challenges, including feelings of isolation, loss of purpose, and the impact of life transitions, the Vet's side offers a supportive environment where older men can come together, bond over their shared love for football, and discuss their mental health concerns openly.

The second team, known as the "KS Mentorvation" side, focuses on addressing mental health issues among teenagers and mostly young black men. Adolescence and young adulthood are critical developmental stages where individuals may experience significant stressors related to gang and criminal pressures, peer relationships, and identity formation. By providing a platform for young men to engage in physical activity, build resilience, and access peer support, the KS Mentorvation aims to promote positive mental health outcomes and equip participants with the tools to navigate life's challenges effectively.

The collaboration between KS and Mentorvation represents a proactive and innovative approach to tackling mental health issues in the community. By harnessing the power of football to create inclusive spaces where men can connect, share, and support each other, the partnership is breaking down stigma and barriers to mental health support. As a result, KS and Mentorvation are not only strengthening their teams on the field but also nurturing healthier, happier communities off the pitch.

Juvenis Partnership

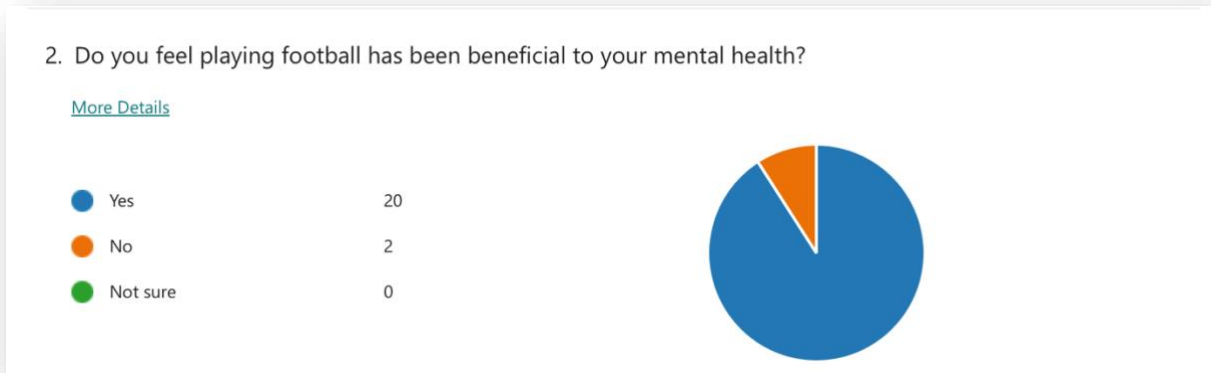
Juvenis and Mentorvation share a common goal of empowering young people by offering tools, guidance, and opportunities to succeed in various aspects of their lives, including, sport, education, career development, and personal growth. Juvenis and Mentorvation work together on community projects and activities, promoting a sense of belonging and active citizenship while helping individuals develop a positive relationship with their communities.

The impact of this partnership is significant. It allows Mentorvation to reach a larger number of young people, particularly those who are at risk or disadvantaged. The combined efforts lead to better outcomes in terms of personal development, and future prospects for the young black boys involved.

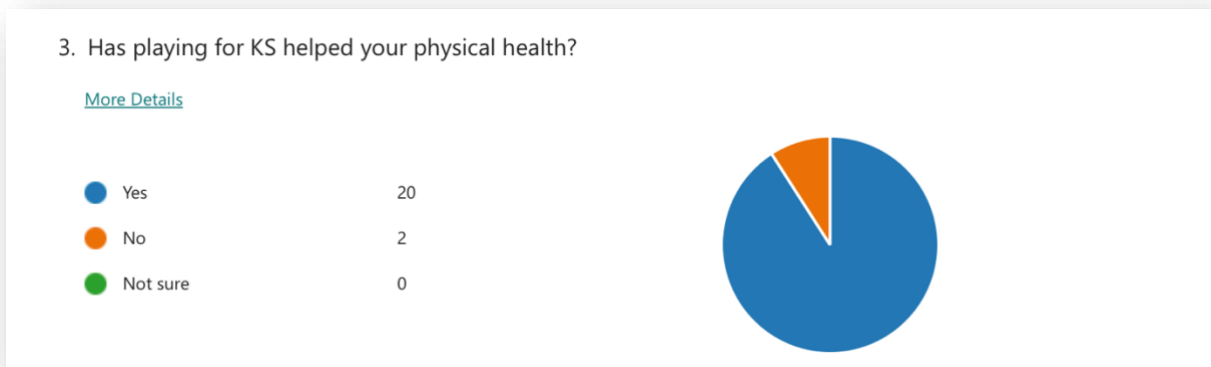
Mental Health and Wellbeing

Data Senior Group

This data is collected throughout the football season giving Mentorvation the required feedback to adjust their support and signposting of services. The senior men had complex mental health concerns ranging from the cost-of-living crisis to depression. The sport, socialising and support of the group moved the majority of men into a healthy mental state.



This highlights the impact of the project on the mental health of the older men's group.



The majority agree that sport is having a positive impact on their health.



Conclusion:

In conclusion, the intersection of sports, particularly football, and mental health represents a promising avenue for supporting black boys and men's well-being in the UK. By leveraging the popularity and accessibility of football, organisations like Mentorvation are breaking down barriers to mental health support and empowering black boys and men to prioritise their emotional well-being. Through continued research, investment, and community engagement, we can harness the power of sports to foster healthier, happier communities and promote positive mental health outcomes across the UK.

Strategies for the Future:

As we move forward, it is crucial to recognise that sports are not just about physical fitness; they are powerful tools for nurturing mental resilience, fostering connections, and promoting overall well-being. By implementing these strategies, we can create a society where black boys and men feel empowered to prioritise their mental health through sports participation.

Mentorvation Strategies for the Future: To maximize the impact of sports on men's mental

Community-Based Sports Programs

- **Inclusive Approach:** Community programs should be inclusive, welcoming black boys, men of all ages, backgrounds, and fitness levels. By removing barriers to participation, such as cost or location, we can encourage more men to join sports activities.
- **Peer Support Networks:** Establishing peer support networks within these programs allows the groups to share their experiences, learn from one another, and provide emotional support. These networks can extend beyond the field, fostering lasting friendships and a sense of belonging.

Community Health Campaigns

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Public health campaigns should specifically target black boys and men, emphasising the mental health benefits of sports. These campaigns can challenge stereotypes, normalise seeking help, and highlight success stories where their peers have benefited from sports-based interventions.



This comprehensive review integrates UK-specific statistics, scientific literature, and the innovative work of organisations like Mentorvation. It underscores the transformative potential of sports in improving men's mental health.

Literature Insights

Scientific literature emphasises the importance of understanding the unique ways in which black boys and men experience and express mental health issues. Studies suggest that creating safe male spaces, using male-sensitive language, and activity-based approaches can significantly improve men's engagement in mental health interventions. Furthermore, historical perspectives reveal that men have traditionally coped with mental health issues through somatic symptoms, often leading to underdiagnosis, which we need to change.

Outcomes

Mentorvation aims to work with these groups to raise awareness of mental health and create an environment that leads to better outcomes for Black boys and men. Through targeted interventions, community engagement, and culturally sensitive support services, Mentorvation strives to dismantle the systemic barriers that contribute to mental health disparities. By fostering open dialogue, providing access to resources, and promoting positive mental health practices, Mentorvation envisions a future where Black boys and men can thrive emotionally, mentally, and socially, free from the burdens of discrimination and stigma.

“There's nothing I'd improve. It's a fantastic set up. I am thankful for the opportunity to play football with great people and additionally thankful to the guys who have made it possible.”



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Case Study

(Alex is not the player's real name and some details have been left out to protect this person's identity)

Alex, a 20-year-old football enthusiast, who grew up in an urban neighbourhood fraught with challenges. Despite his passion for the sport, he found himself overwhelmed by stress and anxiety, struggling to cope with the pressures of life. Life wasn't easy for Alex, raised in a socio-economically disadvantaged area, he faced financial instability from a young age. The weight of these burdens took a toll on his mental health, leaving him feeling hopeless and lost. Along with these struggles was also the fact he lived in an area divided by gangs and crime and he was on the verge of becoming vulnerable to exploitation.

When Alex learned about Mentorvation and the "Goals for Mental Health" initiative, he saw it as an opportunity for change. The program offered more than just football; it provided mentors and a supportive environment where players could openly discuss mental health issues and seek support. With a mixture of hope and scepticism, Alex decided to give it a try.

Stepping onto the football field for the first time felt like a breath of fresh air for Alex. The sound of the ball against his feet, the shouts of his teammates, and the rush of adrenaline all served as a temporary escape from his worries. As he immersed himself in the game, he felt the weight of the world lift off his shoulders, if only for a moment.

But it wasn't just the physical aspect of football that helped Alex; it was the sense of community he found within the team. Surrounded by fellow players who shared his love for the game, he felt a sense of belonging he had long yearned for. Through shared victories and defeats, they formed bonds that transcended the boundaries of the field. For the first time in a while, Alex felt understood and accepted – flaws and all.

As Alex continued to participate in the team, he noticed a gradual shift in his mindset. With each training session, he gained more confidence in his abilities – both as a player and as a person. The encouragement of his mentors, teammates and coaches bolstered his self-belief, allowing him to push past his limits.

But perhaps the most significant change was in how Alex learned to cope with his emotions. Instead of bottling up his feelings or succumbing to despair, he turned to football as a healthy outlet for his struggles. The sport became a form of therapy for him, a way to channel his energy and emotions in a positive direction. Through football, he learned the importance of resilience, perseverance, and self-care – lessons that extended far beyond the confines of the field.

Today, Alex's journey serves as a testament to the transformative power of football in promoting mental wellness. Through dedication, perseverance, and the support of his teammates, he not only rediscovered his love for the game but also reclaimed control over his mental health. As he continues to navigate life's challenges, Alex stands as a shining example of the resilience and strength that can be found through sports.

