

Organisation Name		Reference code
Empire Fighting Chance		2023-10-YO19
Organisation Address		
The Mill, Lower Ashley Road Bristol BS5 0YJ		
Website Address		
https://empirefightingchance.org/		
Type of organisation? (tick all that apply and complete relevant details)		
Charity	Registered Charity Number	Date Registered
Yes	1156690	2014
Community Interest Company	Registered Companies House Number	Date Registered
No		
Social Enterprise	Social Enterprise Mark Awarded Yes/No	Date Awarded
No		
Grant Summary		
We will deliver a project that combines boxing and psychology to prevent 100 'at risk' young people in Bristol from entering the criminal justice system.		
Please describe the local needs that this project will address		
<p>During the past 18 months three young men we were working with have been murdered on Bristol's streets. Dontae, Micky and Eddie all had their lives tragically cut short by knife crime. These incidents reflect an alarming trend of increased youth violence and criminality in Bristol.</p> <p>The rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system in Bristol (225.9 per 100,000 in 2022) is significantly higher than the national average and is increasing. From our boxing gym in inner-city Bristol, we're seeing far more cases of youth crime and violence than ever before, with perpetrators getting younger.</p> <p>The root cause is inequality and its brutal effects. Of the tens of thousands of young people who've been through our doors, we've yet to meet a single one who would have chosen their path. Their choices and responses are shaped by the toxic conditions they battle on a daily basis.</p> <p>Our project will target young people from the most deprived neighbourhoods in Bristol, and among the 10% most disadvantaged in England. These include Lower Layer Super Output areas in Ashley and Lawrence Hill, such as St Judes (our home), Barton Hill, Stapleton Road and St Pauls Grosvenor Road. All are also among the worst 10% for crime (Indices of deprivation, 2019). Austerity, COVID-19 and cost-of-living crisis have combined to intensify the disadvantages faced by our target group.</p> <p>By being born into and rooted in a neighbourhood hit by inequality, we understand the significant toll on families and communities of poverty, poor housing and inadequate services. Our project will support young people who've had multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences, including violence, abuse, neglect, chaotic home lives and parental separation. Our work is built upon years of learning that trauma results in individuals struggling to form healthy attachments and self-regulate emotions and a need to feel safe and belong. Other common issues will include a dearth of positive influences and</p>		

poor physical health. One third will be from minority ethnic groups, who experience a further layer of disadvantage in the form of racial inequality and issues with identity. Facing extraordinarily difficult circumstances, young people struggle with their emotions and feel helpless, alone and that the world is against them. Common presenting issues will include anger, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and hypervigilance. Our project's target group expresses their distress in ways that can lead them into trouble rather than care and support. Young men (who'll form the majority of the cohort) face pressure to 'man-up' and be emotionally strong and silent and engage in destructive behaviours that give them respect, status and a sense of belonging. Common reasons for referrals will include gang membership, aggression, vandalism, criminality and substance misuse.

In the neighbourhoods in which we will work, behavioural issues are exacerbated by territoriality (in the form of postcode rivalries), exploitation from gang leaders, social media (such as fights being filmed on phones) and fear of victimisation (which leads, for example, to young people carrying knives).

Young people's emotional and behavioural issues combine to prevent engagement in education, employment and meaningful relationships. This compounds their distress, and a negative cycle ensues.

Our target group faces powerful barriers to gaining mainstream support. We hear from young people that they don't trust services, often because they've had relationships with adults that are inconsistent, neglectful and even violent. Other themes we hear from young people include how professionals don't understand them and their experiences and that services don't reflect their needs and circumstances.

The delay in accessing support means issues deepen and young people are pushed into punitive services like the Youth Justice System. Our project attempts to get upstream of and prevent this outcome from happening.

What are the key outcomes that you will be seeking to achieve for young offenders?

Our goal is to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system and, instead, to live live safe, healthy and happy lives. We will achieve our goal by enabling young people to achieve three outcomes which will have a lasting and sustainable impact on their lives.

First, young people will develop capacities and resources that we've identified as being critical for our project's target group. These are:

- Better management of emotions & behaviours (through young people using boxing to release emotions and gaining access to rich, evidence-based psychological resources).
- Improved agency (through young people recognising they can make a difference to their lives, developing self-awareness and making decisions and choices independently).
- Improved physical wellbeing (through exercise, learning about healthy behaviours and making changes to diet, sleeping patterns and lifestyle).
- Improved self-confidence (through increased fitness, mastering a sport, recognising strengths and making progress during the programme).
- Healthier relationships with family, friends and adults (through working through relationship issues, experiencing the benefits of having a positive relationship with an adult and making new friends at our gym).
- A more positive outlook about the future (through identifying goals that excite individuals and developing a greater sense of purpose).

Second, by developing these capacities and resources, young people will improve their mental health. Participants will improve how they feel about themselves and their lives and better cope with the stresses of daily life. Some will overcome mental ill-health symptoms, such as anger, anxiety and depression.

Third, young people will reduce their engagement in destructive behaviours that could lead (in the short or longer term) to getting a criminal record. Common behaviours that

we expect to tackle include aggressive behaviour, violence, drug and alcohol misuse, gang and knife crime, offending and vandalism.

Young people will achieve this outcome through:

- Developing the resources described above. For example, improved self-confidence will support individuals to withstand peer pressure, while improved emotional regulation will prevent young people from 'kicking off'.
- Improving their mental health (as our target group's emotional distress is expressed behaviourally).
- Shifting attitudes towards problematic behaviours.
- Engaging in prosocial behaviours - we'll encourage individuals to cooperate, share and help others.
- Developing an awareness of group dynamics. For example, young people will learn about the decreased responsibility each member feels when part of a group (e.g. a group robbing a shop diffuses the guilt across the group).
- Mixing with different people and exposure to positive role models, helping to break links with negative peer groups.
- Taking steps to reduce engagement in problematic behaviours (e.g. leaving a gang).

What are the key activities you will undertake with this funding?

We will use boxing's street cred to recruit young people engaging in crime and violence. We'll triage young people into one of two programmes depending on their needs - Box Champions (20 weeks) and Box Therapy (12 weeks). They'll be assigned to either our 1:1 or small group versions.

Both programmes are centred around a trusted relationship between our coach (youth worker for Box Champions and therapist for Box Therapy) and young person. As such, we'll carefully match individuals with their coach. Young people will only open up and listen to us if we've earned their trust. So, they'll gain support from someone they can relate to and feel comfortable with - a young coach kitted out in tracksuit bottoms and an 'Empire hoodie' and with lived experience of the issues they face.

We'll deliver our work from a real boxing gym, which has produced world champions. Our gym removes the stigma associated with mainstream services and is a place where people feel safe, make new friends and feel part of a family. Individuals will set goals to work towards, typically relating to emotions (e.g. reducing anger), behaviours (e.g. stopping violence) and situations (e.g. leaving a gang).

Both programmes feature weekly sessions built around exercises to improve fitness and develop technical boxing skills. Exercises last for three minutes (like a boxing round) and include pad work, shadow boxing drills and punchbag workouts. The sport builds trust, boosts confidence, manages anger and creates a heightened learning state. During and in between exercises we'll seamlessly weave in conversations to help young people achieve their goals.

Box Champions features youth workers mentoring young people. Box Therapy features therapists delivering a therapeutic intervention using evidence based psychological approaches (e.g. Acceptance & Commitment Therapy). Both programmes draw upon session plans that present to young people life changing psychological knowledge and tools using boxing drills, games and metaphors. For example, we use Empire principle 'Going with the flow' to explain that fighting negative emotions makes us feel more stressed and by leaving them alone our mind will return to a clear, healthy state.

Conversations help individuals:

- discover their strengths, interests & goals.
- shift how they think about themselves and future.
- regulate emotions and behaviours.
- normalise and share feelings and emotions they're experiencing.
- change attitudes toward violence and crime.
- take positive steps to reducing violence and crime (e.g. leaving a gang).

Our Family Liaison Team will regularly communicate with parents/carers to gain their

commitment, offer light touch support and help create healthier relationships at home. At the end, we'll help young people to recognise their progress and identify opportunities to build on these. These include our weekly groups, Box Careers, services from approved partners and joining our alumni programme.

Who will be responsible for overseeing and delivering this work?

Our Operations Manager will oversee our proposed project, ensuring that it runs smoothly and achieves its intended goal and outcomes for young people. Luke Jones currently holds this role. Luke has 10 years of experience of overseeing operations, including three years with us. He is responsible for the day to day running of Empire's services for young people, the charities' facilities and frontline delivery teams. The grant will fund the costs of our Operations Manager's time in overseeing the project. Several of our youth workers and therapists will be responsible for delivering the proposed work for young people. Our youth workers will deliver Box Champions and therapists will deliver Box Therapy. All are appropriately trained and qualified. All have expertise in working with vulnerable young people.

It is vital that our project is able to draw upon several youth workers and therapists to deliver the work so that we can match a young person to an individual who is best placed to support them. The grant will fund the costs of our youth workers and therapists delivering our two programmes to the project's participants.

Several staff will support the delivery of the project. Our Family Liaison Coordinator will regularly communicate with parents/carers of young people. They'll gain their commitment to our work, offer light touch 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. The grant will fund the costs of our Family Liaison Coordinator's time on the project.

Our Finance and Administration Manager will organise the recruitment of young people to the project, mainly through working closely with the police and Bristol Youth Justice Service. They'll also triage young people (including determining whether they would be better suited for Box Champions or Box Therapy), match them to the right practitioner and schedule in sessions. The grant will fund the costs of our Finance and Administration Manager's time on the project.

Our Monitoring and Evaluation Manager will be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the project. Among other things, they'll ensure that our youth workers and therapists collect and store data, analyse this data and ensure that we obtain rich qualitative feedback from young people, parents/carers and referral partners. The grant will fund the costs of our Monitoring and Evaluation Manager's time on the project.

Finally, our freelance gang specialist will enrich the project in a several ways. They'll recruit young people from gangs, strengthen our local intelligence around gangs and violence and provide training and support to our youth workers and therapists so they are even better equipped to work with young people involved in gangs. The grant will not fund these costs as their work has an impact beyond this project.

How will your organisation continue to sustain this project after the grant ends?

This project is an organisational priority for Empire Fighting Chance. The rise in youth crime and violence in Bristol has compelled us to respond. Our proposed project is a key strategy of our response - it would enable us to work with more young people engaging in crime and violence and at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Sadly, we expect that this will remain a priority after the grant ends, meaning we will need to sustain this work beyond the two years of funding.

We will use three main income channels to sustain the work financially. First, we are significantly growing the income that we earn so that we can fund projects like our proposed one ourselves. We earn income from delivering our programmes in schools, renting our gym and training organisations to deliver our work (e.g. Wrexham Youth Justice). Our proposed project will help our efforts to generate income by strengthening our evidence base for working with young people engaged in crime and violence.

Second, we are growing the amount of donations that we receive from individuals and companies. We have put strong foundations in place, including an experienced fundraising team, partnerships with multiple local companies (e.g. Mobius), a calendar of sports based events and we have started to receive donations from High Net Worth Individuals.

Third, if required, we will leverage our proposed project to help us to secure funding in the future from trusts, foundations and other grant giving institutions. We have several assets that will help us secure future funding, including high quality work, a strong evidence base, experience of working with multiple funders, a good reputation and robust grant management processes and systems.

Critically, our project has several qualities that make it sustainable. The project will:

- work towards impact that's considered important to communities and other stakeholders such as police, the local authority and funders.
- deliver high quality activities that young people want to turn up to and keep turning up to - we've never had an issue with recruiting or engaging young people.
- continuously adapt to respond to young people's changing needs and circumstances, ensuring that our project will always stay relevant in the future.
- benefit from robust infrastructure underpinning it, including strong management, partnerships, referral pathways and impact management processes.

We are scaling our impact across the UK through training and supporting boxing clubs and youth services to deliver our work in their communities. We will take insights and learning from this project and embed these into our training and support programme. This means that our proposed project will not rest on the future of one organisation but, far more sustainably, be carried forward by a movement working to transform young lives.

What expertise and track record do you have to be able to deliver this work successfully?

For the past 17 years we've worked with tens of thousands of young people from communities hit by inequality. We've developed considerable expertise in supporting individuals struggling with their emotions and behaviours and unable to engage with mainstream services.

We'll draw upon four key assets. First, we were born into and have become embedded in an inner-city community. This gives us a deep affinity for and understanding of those we support and credibility. Second, we can deliver authentic, quality boxing training from a real boxing gym, making our support appealing, engaging and non-stigmatising. Third, we can offer a psychologically informed space, staff and programmes so that young people feel safe, supported and cared for and gain proven psychological resources to change their lives. Fourth, we've a deep commitment to be in young people's 'corner'. We look beyond what they've done and how they come across to see remarkable young people worth fighting for. We offer unconditional support and go the extra mile to help them to transform their lives.

We have delivered Box Champions and Therapy for several years and built a robust evidence base. In 2022 89% of Box Champions participants were less likely to commit antisocial or criminal acts, 71% were less likely to be part of a gang and 78% improved their self-esteem. Meanwhile, 90% of Box Therapy participants improved their mental wellbeing and 79% felt calmer.

The success of Box Champions led us to scale the programme across the UK. We've trained over 30 boxing clubs and youth services to deliver it in their communities. For example, we work alongside Wrexham Youth Justice to deliver the programme in a boxing gym they created as an alternative to a custodial sentence. 85% have not reoffended.

Despite our success, the murders of three young people on our streets forced us to strengthen our work. We joined Peace in our Cities, a global network working in violence prevention, to identify best practice from across the world. We are, for

<p>example, participating in a knowledge exchange with Colombia's Medellín, which has transformed itself from being the murder capital of the world.</p> <p>We recruited a specialist in gangs with lived experience of youth violence and track record of exiting people from gangs. They're helping us to strengthen our networks and street intelligence (e.g. on local gangs) to reach more young people involved in crime and violence. We're using a Focused Deterrence approach, identifying the small number of individuals committing most of the violence. We'll also draw upon their credibility and links to local gangs, including the '1 6s' and '2 4s'.</p> <p>We have been making our work more relevant for young people involved in crime and violence. We now fast track individuals to our programmes as our response must be quick. We've also been upskilling our staff so they have an even deeper understanding of issues and can better build a trusted relationship.</p>
<p>Explain how the grant will be spent</p>
<p>The majority of the grant will be spent on staffing costs of our delivery team. The expenditure outlined below is for each year of the project. Staffing costs include salaries, national insurance and pension contribution.</p> <p>We will spend £15,418 on our Bristol Coaching Team to deliver the Box Champions programme to young people. Note that, internally, we call our youth workers 'coaches'. The cost represents the equivalent of 0.6 full time coaches.</p> <p>We will spend £11,680 on our Bristol Therapy Team to deliver Box Therapy to young people. The cost represents the equivalent of 0.4 full time therapists.</p> <p>There is a sound reason for us allocating the grant expenditure to our Bristol Coaching Team and Bristol Therapy Team rather than to individual practitioners. This is so that we have a wide pool of youth workers and therapists to select when we match young people to their worker. This, in turn, is rooted in our belief that the development of a trusted relationship is key to achieving the intended outcomes.</p> <p>We will spend some of your grant on the costs of several staff members that will support the delivery of the project. We will spend £1,285 on our Family Liaison Coordinator to communicate with parents/carers of young people throughout their programme. They will work on the project for 5% of their time (0.05 FTE).</p> <p>We will spend £2,102 on our Operations Manager to oversee the project (0.05 FTE).</p> <p>We will spend £2,044 on our Finance and Administration Manager to organise the recruitment of young people, management partnerships with referral partners and schedule in sessions (0.05 FTE).</p> <p>Finally, we will spend £1,752 on our Monitoring and Evaluation Manager to collect and store data and qualitative feedback so that we can effectively monitor and evaluate the project (0.05 FTE).</p> <p>We will spend £5,142 on a fair share of overheads that will enable the project to be delivered. These costs include the maintenance of our boxing gym, insurance, governance, finance and internet and phone costs. The figure represents 15% of the cost of delivering the project. This is based on a calculation which enables us to fairly share our organisation's overheads among our different projects.</p>
<p>Will you be working with young people who are already known to local offending teams and already engaged with interventions such as Out of Court Disposals, Point of Arrest Diversion programmes or other YOT Prevention Programmes?</p>
<p>Yes</p>
<p>If yes, please provide details of which YOTs, Police Teams or other services you will be working with and how.</p>
<p>We will work be working with the following local services in Bristol to secure referrals for the project: Avon and Somerset Police, Bristol Youth Justice Service (Bristol's Youth Offending Team) and Safer Options (Bristol's violence reduction unit). Among other things, Safer Options holds weekly meetings between multiple agencies to identify young people engaging in or at risk of crime and develop a support plan. These services will identify young people who are at risk of entering the criminal justice</p>

system. We already have referral pathways in place for these services. We have run joint projects with Avon and Somerset Police. For example, we recently collaborated to support a cohort of young people at risk of committing violent crime. Note that our strong preference would be to also recruit young people not known to services so that we don't exclude individuals ripe for our project.	
If no, please provide details of how you will engage with young people in the community who are at risk of gaining a criminal record.	
Will you be receiving funding from any other sources for this project?	
No	
Do all staff have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks? If no please state why.	
Yes	
Reason why not all staff have DBS checks.	
Total funding requested in this application (£10,000 to £80,000 with a maximum of £40,000 in one year)	
£78846	
Proposed grant start date	Proposed grant duration in months
4/1/2024	24
How much funding is required each year?	
Year 1	Year 2
£39423	£39423
What was your organisation's expenditure in the most recent financial year?	What was your organisation's annual income in the most recent financial year?
£1149263	£1175448
What value of unrestricted reserves did your organisation have at the end of the most recent financial year?	
£612012	