



Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology

WHEN FOOTBALL BECOMES A LIFELINE



Evaluation Report

Liverpool Homeless Football Club (LHFC)- May 2018

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Executive Summary

Introduction

LHFC began its journey back in 2007 when homelessness was on the increase. The organisation noticed there was something missing within the community to help individuals living in hostels and on the streets of Liverpool. What was missing was an organisation that used the power of sport namely football to distract them away from any complex issues they were suffering due to homelessness. LHFC initially back in 2007 ‘used jumpers for goalposts’ and has grown considerably in the last 11 years. LHFC offer a wide variety of support to its members through their service which includes health & wellbeing physically and mentally, training & employment opportunities and above all getting everyone actively engaged through football.

Main purpose of the study

LHFC requested a research report to be done to evaluate the service they provide their members. LHFC have a men’s 11-a-side and 5-a-side football team, this evaluation will focus solely on the male members of the football team. LHFC would like a report which highlights the impact this intervention has had on their lives since becoming a member. It also would like to discover the main reasons why individuals attend and join in the sessions they provide. Finally, they would like to know if certain aspects need altering, as this will help them to make changes for the better in the future. This report was conducted as part of the interchange programme. This programme works in collaboration with independent charities such as LHFC to provide them with effective research with the aim for improvements to be implemented in their organisation.

How the research has been done

This report has been done with focus on the men's football team to answer the questions LHFC would like to discover. LHFC has both a men's and women's football. In recent times the women's football team have become very successful. However, this research was gathered through data collected from the members of the men's football team. Data was collected from interviews during January, February and March 2018. Five members of the football team all gave a face-to-face interview in which they were asked questions around the impact LHFC has had on their lives since becoming a member.

Key themes and findings:

Belonging like a family, Health benefits and Team work. These themes will be discussed and explained throughout this section of the report.

- The players all agree that the support network is massive.
 - Players love the family orientated nature of LHFC its referred to as like having an extended family.
 - LHFC have faith and trust in their members to achieve the best.
 - Every player claimed a sense of belonging and feeling of inclusion since becoming a member.
 - Players felt part of something and have made great friends through LHFC.
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- Players love the football sessions and look forward to match days and tournaments.
 - Players look forward to seeing the other team members each week.
 - LHFC has given these men a sense of inclusion and acceptance.

- Members love the engagement with other team members the camaraderie.
- All the members of the men's football team have noticed an improvement in their physical fitness.
- The men have become active again after years of no exercise.
- Players leave matches and sessions in high spirits feeling positive about themselves.
- LHFC has got these men motivated and given them confidence on and off the pitch.

Introduction

Background

Liverpool Homeless Football Club (LHFC) is a community interest company which has been operating across a regional and national level since 2007. In 2007 homelessness increased, this was due to the cuts in funding of public services creating ‘unaffordable housing and the cost of private rent rising, which put people at risk of losing their homes’ (Ubido, et al, 2014). LHFC recognised a need to set up an organisation in which would help individuals suffering homelessness. Furthermore, the introduction of the bedroom tax in 2013 had also affected the risks of many losing their homes. Tenants in social housing would suffer having their benefit reduced by 14% if they have a spare bedroom or 25% if they have two or more’ (the Guardian, 2017). Liverpool is a community where football is a massive part of the city’s culture having two great teams Liverpool and Everton this city in fact lives and breathes football. LHFC saw potential through the power of football to change lives of individuals who have or are experiencing homelessness. Using football to combat social isolation and offering individuals a chance to gain some social interaction and rebuild their lives. LHFC offers free provision to both men and women of all ages, giving them an opportunity to improve both their physical and mental health. Its office is based at Dale street in the heart of Liverpool city centre. Football sessions take place weekly at the Powerleague 5-a-side Football Centre, more commonly known as the ‘The Pitz’ which is in Kirkdale 2 miles from Liverpool’s city centre. It is almost 11 years LHFC has been providing a service to individuals. In that time the organisation has assisted 236 into employment, helped 296 complete training courses, gained 2438 access to health support services and served over 25036 meals to individuals (LHFC.com, 2018).

1.2 Who we are, and what we do

LHFC main aim is to offer individuals both men and women across Merseyside who are struggling with homelessness support. They provide opportunities using football as a tool to help build confidence and improve their overall wellbeing. Although football is not all the organisation offer it is their unique selling point. LHFC is made up of paid staff and volunteers who all have the experience and knowledge to deliver the right advice needed, around any issues individuals may be suffering. All the staff come from backgrounds in social housing, teachers and the law field. This allows the team to use their previous expertise to advise and mentor any issues individuals may be suffering. They also work with many partner organisations closely guiding individuals in the right direction to the help they may need. LHFC unique selling point is football and is used a tool to help those who have become marginalised due to issues such as drug misuse, family breakdowns, alcohol abuse, and other complex issues. Alternatively, LHFC also offers its members other opportunities as opposed to sport which includes free training courses, health and wellbeing sessions and walking sessions. All of which are set up to combat the feeling of social exclusion and isolation.

Main purpose of research study/Interchange programme

The main purpose of this research is to provide an evaluation of LHFC, focusing on the men's football team. This has been set up through both interchange and LHFC. Interchange is a charity which works with community and voluntary based organisations, in providing students with work-based learning opportunities as part of their degree programme. The research that is carried out proves beneficial to both the organisation and student. LHFC requested an evaluation of its current programme requesting an up to date picture on its provision and how it's working. Evaluation 'focuses on the aims of the programme and investigates its best intentions allowing to indicate future directions' (Hall and Hall, 2004:6). The evaluation has been suggested by LHFC to review the service they provide for their men's football team. This is a collaboration of researcher, staff/volunteers and link worker of whom all have expertise in benefiting the organisation. An agreement was set up by all parties through a learning agreement which discusses the aims. The aims of this project will be, to look at the main reasons why members attend the sessions and activities at LHFC? Focusing solely on the male members of the football team.

The Project

This project looks to uncover whether improvements can be made to LHFC to offer its members, more positive changes for homelessness in Liverpool. (Robson, 2017) claims that “Like poverty, homelessness is real, but it’s not inevitable”. Looking to draw out its strengths and weaknesses this research aims to discover:

- What works in this organisation and why.
- How the service is working for its members.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the views and experiences of members in the hope of encouraging new members.

This research report will benefit both the researcher and LHFC highlighting any weaknesses which may need help to improve. Also offering recommendations which will help the organisation and its future funding.

Literature Review

The literature review gives a wider understanding and an up to date picture on the topic in question. It also explains how LHFC works within a community and fits within the literature. 'Homelessness is caused by a complex interplay between a person's individual circumstances and adverse 'structural' factors outside their direct control' (England.shelter.org.uk, 2018). LHFC offers homeless individuals and that suffering homelessness a chance to gain a sense of inclusion and aims to assist them to integrate back into the wider society. Football is used as a tool to combat social isolation, social exclusion, and loneliness this helps its members gain a sense of belonging through sport. Football, homelessness and sports development literature has shown how sport is used to benefit marginalised groups through a process of reengagement and social capital. Marginalized groups, and those experiencing homelessness, are often largely excluded from participating in, and gaining the benefits of sport programs and events (Sherry, 2010). Many individuals who are socially excluded within society have unequal access to educational, occupational, and political opportunities (Sherry, 2010 p60). However, Barry (2002) argues that there are certain material conditions that must be satisfied to avoid social exclusion. One of the most basic needs is having somewhere to live, those sleeping rough or moving from one hostel to another are denied many forms of participation which includes sport and recreation (p.27). 'Rough sleepers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society' (S. Griffiths, 2002:1).

Key findings in literature has suggested that the rough sleeper population consists of 90% of them being male and 50% over 25 years of age. (S. Griffiths, 2002:2). Sleeping rough due to homelessness can be caused

through several factors two of which are poverty and lack of affordable housing. It was claimed by Drake and O'Brien (1981, cited in Fitzpatrick, 2005:4) that a Government- report published in 1981 "attributed homelessness as primarily to insufficient supply of affordable accommodation for those in weak economic positions". Individuals who fall into such unfortunate circumstances due to factors which they are unable to control, are given the chance to rebuild their lives through the power of football. LHFC have used football for its members to make positive changes within their lives. A study using the case of the Australian Homeless World Cup team argue that sport is beginning to gain attention as a viable medium and a fundamental step for promoting social inclusion (Bailey, 2005). Linking social inclusion, social capital, and sport will begin to address how LHFC use football to break down these barriers. Crabbe (2007) posits that 'the notion of the "power of sport" to do social good [and] . . . belief in the wider benefits of sport has rarely been so strongly advocated' (p. 27). Playing football is a physical activity that requires individuals to play as a team. Playing as a team allows its team members to communicate with each other this creates a form of social inclusion straight away (Bower, M., E. and Perz, J. 2017). Actively participating in sport such as football be a necessary activity an individual must undertake, making it an ideal form of social intervention (Hartmann, 2003). Many who are suffering homelessness often feel alone and lonely which isolates them from the wider society. Johnson & Tseng (2014 cited in Sherry, 2010) claim that a recent Australian report found that approximately 21% of those experiencing any type of homelessness had zero friends.

Homelessness often results in lonely nights on the streets or in hostels with no engagement with other individuals. Although there are relatively few studies in relation to loneliness among homeless. Sanders & Brown,

(2015, cited in Sherry, 2010) suggest those who have, found that homeless are particularly vulnerable to loneliness; within a survey of 506 British homeless service users. Lauder et., al, (2004, cited in Sherry, 2010) claim according to this survey, 77% felt “lonely” sometimes or often, as opposed to 35.7% found in mainstream communities. Furthermore, more recently the Prime Minister on the 17th January 2018 set out a series of recommendations from the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness to tackle loneliness and combat social isolation (Gov.uk, 2018). Loneliness can be triggered through many issues with certain groups particularly at risk. A cross -government strategy which offers to stimulate innovative solutions to loneliness across all ages, backgrounds and communities will become effective this year (Gov.uk, 2018).

Methodology

This research report will use qualitative methods of data collection for the evaluation. This gives a clearer picture of how a service works (Hall and Hall, 2004). Conducting semi-structured interviews as opposed to questionnaires gives a broader insight into an individual's understandings and experiences (Hall and Hall, 2004). Semi-structured interviews rely upon a list of intended questions; however, this type of interview allows the flexibility to ask additional questions during the interview process (Bryman, 2000). Although the interview questions I asked were specific to what LHFC wanted to know in relation to the evaluation of the men's football team which featured on LHFC research report request. However, I had compiled some additional questions in case interviews were slightly short. Focusing on 7 interviews to produce an in-depth knowledge into why individuals attend LHFC. In depth interviews were carried out from a wide range of different stakeholders ranging from 5 members, a football coach who began as a member to a high-profile trustee of the organisation all of whom were men. Using a small sample of members enables you to collect a detailed account of everyone's journey into why LHFC works for them alternatively what doesn't work for them. The methods used consisted of a relatively small group of individuals in order not to generate masses of data. It has been suggested that undertaking a small-scale evaluation can prove to be a learning experience for all parties involved (Hall and Hall, 2004). It has been claimed that 'local organisations who need funding may have a greater chance of implementation as there are smaller costs involved as opposed to regional or national programmes' (Robson, C. 2011:8). This can often be a strength when conducting small local research.

Limitations

Within the research process there will always be certain limitations that may arise within the collecting of data throughout the methods used. Although interview research allows you to gather data face to face with the participant there are sometimes limitations to interviews as what people say in interviews can be very different from what they do (Smith, 1986 et al p332). However, avoiding leading questions and keeping to a structured set of questions allows the interview to develop naturally. One of the main disadvantages of interviews is the problem of 'interview bias's this happens when the interviewer influences and directs the answer given by the respondent (Smith, 1986 et al p332). It is important as your job as an interviewer is to get the participants to talk freely and openly, as your own behaviour has a major influence on their willingness to do so (Robson, 2017 p281). Due to the time scale and deadlines it was unfortunate that I could only conduct 7 short interviews making this a small sample of men. This was due to some of the sessions being called off at the venue because of weather conditions as the football sessions were held outdoors. Nevertheless, the face to face interviews that did take place allowed me to gather interesting responses for my research study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are crucial in social research and to this end, this study was approved by the School of Law and Social justice committee at University of Liverpool. Research could be conducted in a manner that adhered to The British Sociological Association ethical guidelines for social research (British Sociological Association 2002). It is imperative to comply with these guidelines as it is to protect both researcher and individuals. It has been suggested by Diener and Crandall (1978, cited by Bryman, 2015: p125) the importance of no harm to participants, or they do not suffer any invasion to their privacy”. Members who took part in the study had suffered or were suffering homelessness from a few months to several years. All of whom either lived back with parents, are sofa surfing, hostel based, awaiting accommodation to living independently and back integrated into their own place. Individuals who are suffering homelessness or are homeless are typically considered a ‘vulnerable group’. This can often be due to those who are suffering with addictions or mental health issues. The researcher need to be sensitive to the needs of specific groups and the individuals used in their research sample (Robson, 2017 p211). Participants were recruited upon their attendance to the football training sessions at the Pitz in Kirkdale. All the men attending the football sessions were asked to take part in the research study. However, it was the once who volunteered themselves that were interviewed. However, the participants within this study consisted of volunteers, members and a trustee of LHFC with ages between 19-55 males, who all fully understood the nature of my research study.

Data Analysis

Utilising qualitative data collected in the form of interviews from current members and volunteers of LHFC. Data analysis began using techniques from grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Once data was collected interviews were written up and coding was applied to find any similarities in what each member said. This allowed all parts of the data that was collected to be analysed coded and put into categories (Robson, C. 2011 p467). Recurring words and concepts were highlighted throughout the process of the research, enabling categories to emerge within the data. Thematic analysis was then utilised to look for patterns and themes in relation to the research topic on what LHFC meant to its members. Thematic coding reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants which are the effects of discourses that operate within society (Robson, C. 2011 p474). Once the categories were identified themes began to emerge which became a potential interest to the research question. There were three themes that became apparent from the interviews of members views and experiences which are as follows. Belonging like a family, Health benefits and Team work. These themes will be discussed and explained throughout this section of the report.

Findings

Belonging like a family

When analysing the data from the interviews it became apparent that the ‘feeling of belonging like a family’ arose many times within the interview transcripts. Belonging like a family is something many homeless individuals feel disengaged from due to the structural forces that have found them in such unfortunate circumstances. (Vandermark, 2007 p242) suggests when we lose our place in the world or our role in society, the basic sense of self is diminished, this then may lead to anxiety and depression.

As one participant reported:

I used to sit alone all day every day depressed drinking cider due to a relationship breakdown before becoming a member. “LHFC has helped me become socially included and connected with other lads through football. The organisation has welcomed me in and this has given me a positive outlook on life and hope for the future” (member 1).

A variety of things can often extend the sense of self to a group, for example a national kit or traditional dress (Vandermark, 2007 p244). Football is a sport in which the kit represents the team, giving individuals the sense of belonging to a group.

This is captured by the statement below:

“Football is a physical activity, you are not saying come sit in a room have a chat. Its turn up put a kit on engage with the other members and have a kick about” (Trustee, LHFC).

The participant continues:

This is not an organisation that says we can change everyone. What it is saying is we can help those who want to be involved and move forward. This makes a slip stream for others to follow. It’s like a wave on the beach, the first wave isn’t the biggest but makes the next wave come along bigger and bigger (Trustee, LHFC).

It has been suggested by (Hartman, 2003) that meaningful social change comes about, not because of grand sweeping revolutions but through small ongoing changes that manifest during people's daily lives. Because of homelessness individuals often experience, physical threats to their existence such as violence and hunger. However, exclusion from society is a less obvious but equally painful denial of existence that many homeless people experience (Vandermark, 2007 p246). This in turn provokes a sense of displacement which may also create anxiety and depression. Allowing individuals access to an environment in which they feel included and develop a sense of belonging is central to self-identity and the sense of belonging (Vandermark, 2007 p246).

Participants reported first impressions set the tone:

'Upon attending for the first time the staff were friendly, and approachable it's a safe environment to be in. Its their relaxed approach is what done it for me, they are unlike any organisation I have been to before. It's the way they treat you and listen, LHFC make you feel like you belong again' (member 2).

Also, the ongoing support provided by the staff:

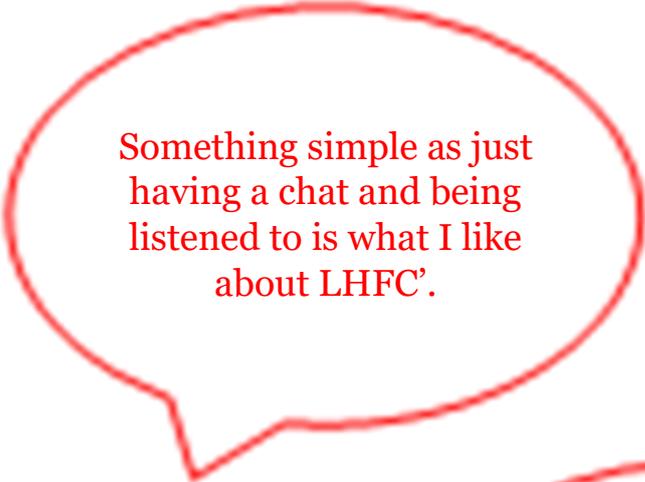
'The staff and volunteers are the main reason why when people come down they come back. They are all very approachable and have a great relationship with all of us' (member 3).

Participants saw LHFC as an organisation that see beyond the negative stereo- types of homelessness, for many who are homeless who have no home, job and poor educated. Instead they work to eradicate such negative perceptions.

'I love the engagement with the other lads, gives you a sense of inclusion, no one is excluded. The organisation wants us all to get involved no one is discriminated' (member 3).

Belonging like a family emerged early on throughout the interviews it was a crucial part in LHFC approach to its members. Staff and volunteers use their expertise, professionalism and family values to gain trust within its members. The relationship with the organisation was something that stuck out within the interviews. This became apparent when questioning its members on what features they liked about LHFC. The sense of belonging and feeling included upon arrival, and becoming a member was an important feature to these men.

Further comments from participants:



Something simple as just having a chat and being listened to is what I like about LHFC'.



Being valued and respected by the staff and volunteers'.



'The staff make you feel welcome and make you feel like part of a family'.

Members of the men's football team spoke of how their relationship with LHFC has given them a sense of belonging. The staff and volunteers can create a positive and safe environment in which its members feel socially included. The feeling of social inclusion and belonging is what LHFC strive to achieve for all its members.

Team work

Another key theme that emerged from the data was team work. The sense of being part of a team is crucial to LHFC as they strive to achieve that everyone engages and communicates with each other through the power of football.

As one participant reported:

“Lads who attend their first football session are often low end of the scale. Within a couple of sessions, they are supporting and communicating with each other. A sense of comradeship and team work is already developing, from just a little kick about” (Coach).

Another statement exemplified the impact of LHFC for members is:

‘Before coming a member I felt isolated and suddenly through having a game of footy with the lads that isolation is broken for the time you're on the pitch. This can happen through the team members just shouting your name to pass the ball’ (Trustee, LHFC).

Sport is understood to be an activity that encourages our best efforts and demands genuine participation (Gaffney, 2015 p2). Through simple participation in a game of football to just coming along to LHFC and just watching a game can be a massive achievement for homeless men. Sherry (2010) argues that participation has led to transformations in individual's personal situations. Which in turn has resulted in outcomes such as access to stable housing, education and training programs, plus employment and physical health benefits. The importance of teamwork and individuals

becoming actively engaged through participation in football be powerful. Football allows individuals to come together and work as a team as well as becoming actively engaged.

Teamwork within football addresses the principle its not about the winning or losing it's the taking part that counts. Its the social inclusion for some of these guys. Teamwork presents the same challenge to all its players regardless the ability of the player- from the gifted player to the player who struggles to hold his own. It is expected that each player is recognised and honours the team principle (Gaffney, 2015 p2).

As one participant reported:

'It doesn't matter how good or bad a player you are all the lads have patience and respect each other's ability on that pitch' (Coach).

A team member knows instinctively that he cannot even hint that he would put his own self-interest before that of the team because such an attitude, no matter who expresses it, strikes everyone as indefensible, even unspeakable (Gaffney, 2015 p2).

This team spirit is evident in the data:

'All the lads in the team tell me I am really good, this motivates me. I turned up for a tournament once a bit under the weather put on my footy kit, I didn't want to let the lads in the team down' (member 4).

This team spirit is a recognised phenomena: 'Play the game the right way, respect your teammates and your opponents, and don't worry about who comes out on top, because in the long run the final tally is just a footnote' (Gaffney, 2015 p2).

Psychologist Rollo May says that "*My sense of being is not my capacity to see the outside world ..., it is rather my capacity to see myself as being in*

the world, to know myself as the being who can do these things”
(Vandermark, 2007 p246).

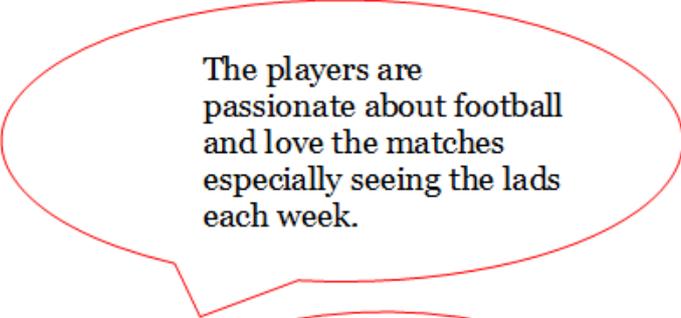
This sense of belonging and team spirit can lead members on to new opportunities. As one member reported:

*‘On becoming a member to now LHFC has helped me gain my level 1 coaching and I now volunteer at games. I can jump in and referee the team at any game something I never thought I could do or ever achieve’
(member/volunteer 3).*

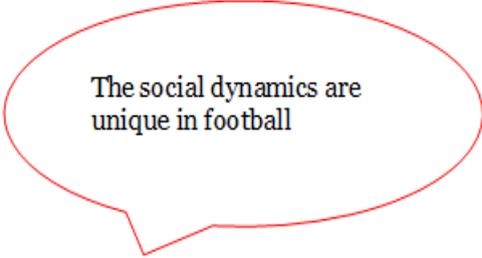
As Gaffney argues, players find their being in the team and therefore experience the team principle as empowering and liberating, rather than negating and constraining (2015, p20).

Teamwork was significant theme which meant a lot to these men through football. Football and working as a team on the pitch has taught them to address all the qualities they have achieved at becoming part of a football team. Being part of a team is not only being actively engaged it allows a communication to develop between a group of people. Football gives individuals a sense of responsibility to each other, a mutual respect in which you work together as team. For those who are completely socially isolated from integration with other individuals this can be rewarding. When you walk of that pitch the communication develops further as you talk about the game and suddenly you have made friends with the other lads. A feeling of achievement is felt by all involved.

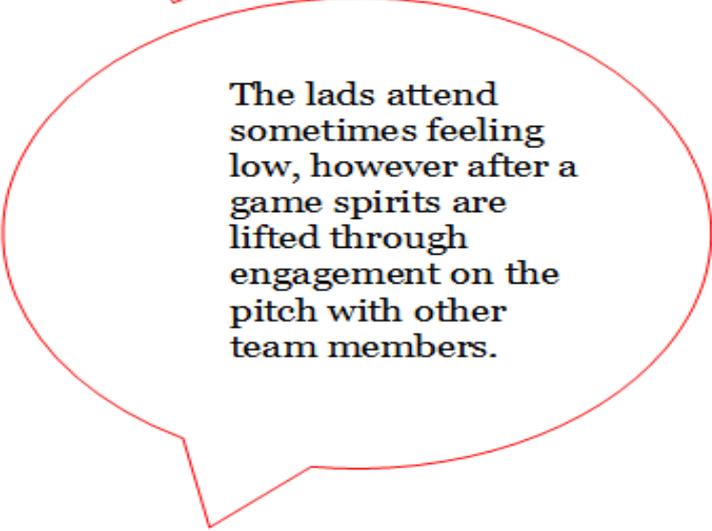
Further comments from participants:



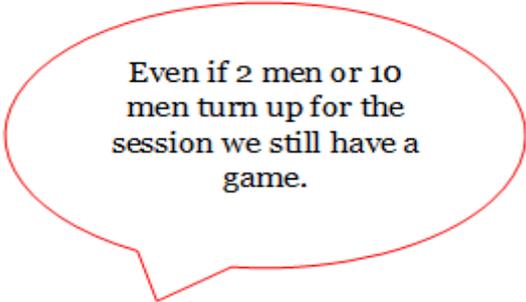
The players are passionate about football and love the matches especially seeing the lads each week.



The social dynamics are unique in football



The lads attend sometimes feeling low, however after a game spirits are lifted through engagement on the pitch with other team members.



Even if 2 men or 10 men turn up for the session we still have a game.

The impact of working in a team through football is powerful it breaks down a lot of barriers that these men have been suffering due to homelessness. It is apparent that positive outcomes have transpired through them being a part of LHFC. The improvements and barriers that have been broken down through football is massive.

Health Benefits

Health benefits was another crucial theme which emerged within the data. Each individual member spoke of how different types of life courses had led them to become homeless or affected by homelessness. All interviewees had suffered health problems due their circumstances. Such issues have affected their health, and, in some cases, long term health problems have emerged. Socio – economic factors which ranged between

alcohol issues, mental health, relationship breakdowns and many more complex issues were raised. The health benefits offered through LHFC within the football and organisation was an important factor to its members.

As one participant reported:

‘Some of the members come to football sessions drink and drug free especially for the game. Its in fact a silent effect, alcohol free or drug free for the morning is positive. This can be the start of potential changes to one’s individual’s health and road to making changes for the better’ (Coach).

Another participant stated:

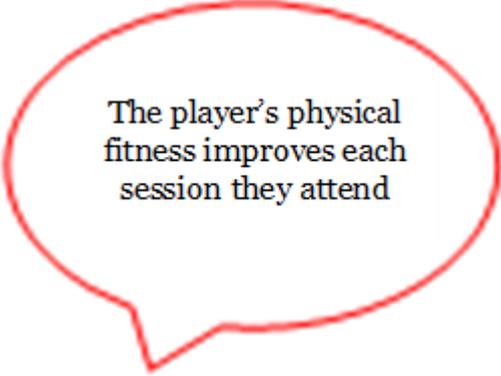
“The more I come the fitter I am getting”

Another participant stated;

“I have recently been housed but I still attend it keeps me fit”

Health benefits be the biggest factor in actively engaging in football and could potentially have a big impact on individuals. This is something which is crucial in moving forward to a healthier and lifestyle. For some of these men this is the only exercise they engage in so to come down each week and to the football tournaments can have a positive effect in turning around certain health issues. Tournaments which are held monthly offer players the chance to undergo basic health checks at least once a season. Homelessness individuals can sometimes find it hard to gain access to doctor’s surgeries as having no address makes it difficult. LHFC encourage its members to basic take these basic health checks to improve their mental and physical well- being.

Further comments from participants:



The player's physical fitness improves each session they attend



All the players have improved in confidence they all find it easier to engage with other individuals.



The football keeps the lads fit it motivates them.

Conclusion and Recommendations

LHFC has shown it offers many strengths within its organisation which is apparent throughout the research. Football has encouraged these men who are homeless and suffering homelessness a positive and successful outlook not only on them as individuals but also their health and well-being. Members look forward to training sessions and match days each week, football gives these men something to focus on which is positive. For many players participation in football through LHFC has been life changing. Players have grown in confidence on and off the pitch which is something that has helped them in tackling homelessness. LHFC has achieved so many success stories and positive outcomes are apparent from its members over the years. LHFC have managed to attract a high-profile trustee to support their organisation who stated “the organisation made such great sense the whole ethos behind it, is what ticked the boxes for him. In his statement he claimed, “it was an honour to come on board with the team”. LHFC have also gained acknowledgement through the media and from awards won over the years. However, funding applications are a slow process at certain points throughout the year which affect sessions. LHFC has proved over the last 11 years that their organisation has been a positive journey for so many of its members. However, there is always room for improvement in all organisations.

There were a few issues raised within the interviews that could be improved to benefit the organisation in moving forward and attracting new and future members. Improvements in which participants addressed were travel and communication. LHFC do all they can to provide sessions each week, however there is often some issues with the mini bus which picks up the lads and brings them to training sessions. It has been stated

that sometimes the bus doesn't turn up due to being used by partner organisations, therefore lads are unable to attend. This leaves the members frustrated as they look forward to the football training sessions.

As one participant reported;

'Sometimes the bus doesn't turn up to collect us'.

The same participant recommended:

"Maybe just give us a bus ticket each week to get to sessions"

Communication was another issue raised within the research members raised the point that when football sessions are off due to weather etc, they are often unaware until they arrive that they have been called off. There are sessions that run all year round for the members, however the football matches do not, this is something that was also highlighted within the research.

Another statement exemplified that more football is needed:

"It would be great if the football tournaments were all year round this would be even better".

Without funding there is only so much the organisation and volunteers can do. Setting up sessions, matches and tournaments can be very time consuming for a limited number of staff. This is where communication may be broken down as the few staff they have are doing so many things to improve LHFC. Therefore, funding is crucial to take the pressure of staff and volunteers in helping them to put things in place at a faster level. Overall research has shown the importance in participation in sport i.e. football has on the members of LHFC. The Australian World Cup homeless football team has shown such an organisation can grow and become massive. This suggests that with regular funding LHFC may be able to also grow as an organisation to change the lives of many more on a bigger scale.

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Interview Questions

Questions for members/volunteers and Coach

- How long have you been a member of LHFC?
- What are the features of LHFC, you most like for e.g. sessions, groups etc?
- Are there any features you dislike?
- What other services would you suggest LHFC might offer?
- What do you think would attract new members?

Questions for Trustee

- What led you to become engaged in a small grass roots organisation such as LHFC?
- Why do you think football is a lifeline regarding homelessness?
- From when you become involved in LHFC where do you see the future of the organisation?



INTERCHANGE
Interchange Portfolio: work-based learning

PROJECT STRATEGY/ETHICS

Name of Student: Jane Owens
Name of Client Organisation: Liverpool Homeless Football Club (LHFC)
Name of Link Worker: John Finnigan (CEO)
Project title: When Football Becomes a Lifeline
<p>Client Organisation Background:</p> <p>Liverpool Homeless Football Club (LHFC) is a community interest company which offers individuals of Liverpool, who are struggling with homelessness support. They provide opportunities using football as a tool to help build confidence and improve their overall wellbeing.</p> <p>Existing literature:</p> <p>‘Rough sleepers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society’ (S. Griffiths, 2002:1). Key findings within a literature review has suggested that the rough sleeper population consists of 90% of them being male and 50% over 25. (S. Griffiths, 2002:2). This project focuses on the men’s football team at LHFC who all sleep rough or are homeless. Sleeping rough due to homelessness can be caused through several factors two of which are poverty and lack of affordable housing. It was claimed by Drake and O’Brien (1981, cited in Fitzpatrick, 2005:4) that a Government- report published in 1981 “attributed homelessness as primarily to insufficient supply of affordable accommodation for those in weak economic positions”.</p> <p>Homelessness on a national level introduced the Homelessness Act 2002, ‘which places statutory free duties on all local housing authorities to provide free advice to households within its area, who are homeless or threatened with homelessness’ (Ubido, et al, 2014). Five years after this act was introduced the risk of homelessness had increased due to the economic downturn in 2007. This led to cuts in funding of public services creating ‘unaffordable housing and the cost of private rent rising, which put people at risk of losing their homes’ (Ubido, et al, 2014). In 2013 the Government introduced the Bedroom Tax in which ‘tenants in social housing have their benefit reduced by 14% if they have a spare bedroom or 25% if they have two or more’ (the Guardian,</p>

2017). This also put pressure on individuals and heightened the risk of homelessness.

With the introduction of 'No Second Night' which launched 1st April 2011 in London as part of a pilot project. Aimed at individuals arriving in Central London to sleep rough for the first time. Offering support so they don't have to spend a second night on the streets (NSNO 2017). Liverpool City Council have embraced the concept of 'No Second Night Out' and that homelessness is a societal problem, therefore should be addressed by all. (LCC, 2017). They have set up the Homelessness Strategy 2016-2020, launched 7th September 2016. This strategy collaborates with all its stakeholders across Liverpool. By working with people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Local services having more flexibility to deliver the help that is needed due to the Localism Act 2011. The aim is to prevent and reduce homelessness over the next four years (LCC, 2017).

Individuals who are homeless are often seen as having no home, job and are uneducated. This is could not be further from the truth there are so many reasons individuals end up in this position. LHFC are an organisation who see beyond the negative stereo- types of homelessness. This project will look to investigate what more can LHFC offer its members, making positive changes for homelessness in Liverpool. (Robson, 2017) claims that "Like poverty, homelessness is real, but it's not inevitable"

Project aims:

The aims of this project are to evaluate LHFC current provision focusing on the men's football team. LHFC has requested an evaluation of its current programme requesting an up to date picture on its provision and how it's working. Evaluation 'focuses on the aims of the programme and investigates its best intentions allowing to indicate future directions' (Hall and Hall, 2004:6). The evaluation has been suggested by LHFC to review the project this will be a collaboration of researcher, staff/volunteers and link worker of whom all have expertise in benefiting the organisation.

The aims of my project will be:

To look at the main reasons why individuals attend the sessions and activities at LHFC emphasising its strengths and weaknesses.

How the service is working for its members, also what other interventions would encourage new members?

What are the social benefits existing members have gained since attending and has attending encouraged them to seek further education, training, volunteering and/or employment?

Highlighting the effectiveness of what LHFC offers its members. In turn locating what is not so effective. Proposing changes if necessary or suggesting a proposal of changes which is found within the research and feedback gathered.

Methods, procedures and/or activities

The process which I will be undertaking before my research begins is to visit the organisation on a weekly basis to gain a clear picture on how LHFC functions, to build a starting point in preparing to collect my own data. During each visit I will get to know staff/volunteers and members. The organisation has provided me with some literature in preparation before my project begins. This will allow me to develop a better understanding into what issues may need addressing and help secure future funding.

The methods used will each consist of relatively small groups of individuals in order not to generate masses of data. It has been suggested that undertaking a small-scale evaluation can prove to be a learning experience for all parties involved (Hall and Hall, 2004). It has been claimed that 'local organisations who need funding may have a greater chance of implementations as there is smaller costs involved as opposed to regional or national programmes' (Robson, 2011:8). This is possibly a strength when conducting small local research, which I anticipate will benefit all involved. My data collection will be put together enabling me to evaluate using observation, an interview with a volunteer, a walking interview and a possible second walking interview depending on time given. All of which is to review how the organisation is currently working, beneficial to both organisation and researcher. Using research to complete my undergraduate studies using applied social research.

1. The Interview with volunteer

Sampling strategy

An interview will be conducted with one of the previous members who now themselves a volunteer at LHFC. The interviewee will be selected from a list of potential volunteers provided by my link worker and from this I will choose a potential participant, thereby avoiding potential bias from my link worker choosing someone who it's known will be positive about the service.

Gaining consent

The volunteer will be given a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and have it explained to them (Appendix A). They will then be asked if they are happy to sign the consent form (Appendix D).

Although my focus is the men's football team I decided to also interview someone who was once a previous member who know is a volunteer. My reasoning behind this is to develop a wider perspective of homelessness as

they were once in that position themselves. Therefore, they have experienced all what other members are facing. Due to the volunteers being possibly bias towards the organisation it will be interesting to compare both sets of interviews, members and previous members/volunteers. Due to the brief time scale given it is important to make sure the right questions are asked.

1. Walking interviews

Walking interviews will be used to collect data during one of the activity walking sessions. These sessions are set up for members by walking and talking to get know each other away from their usual surroundings. I will get to know the group and build up a mutual trust with participants. Trust is important during the sharing of information (Silverman, 2011). Each walking activity takes up to 10 members plus staff and often takes place by walking up Moel Famau, it will be here I will collect my data.

Sampling strategy

It will be down to the organisation what members and staff attend the activity. My link worker will identify which members to approach for these walking interviews. This is to ensure that that I don't approach anyone who may be going through a difficult time or who may be experiencing any mental distress. I hope to approach two or three members.

Gaining consent

I will approach members identified as appropriate participants before the walk begins. I will give them a PIS (Appendix B) and talk this through as well as asking them if they are happy to sign the consent form (Appendix D). I will then approach them during the walk and ask if it's a good time to have a chat about the service and whether I can audio record our conversation.

'It has been argued that walking interviews generate a richer data, because the interviewees are often prompted by meaning through the environment they are in' (Evans and Jones, 2011:1). Suggesting that a much more relaxed atmosphere encourages individuals to speak freely. This was also supported by Hitchins and Jones (2004, cited in Evans and Jones, 2011:2) who suggest that "walking with participants around gardens found that respondents found it easier to verbalise attitudes and feelings when 'in place'. My rationale is to generate rich data that has been suggested to be found within walking interviews.

Single Interview and walking interviews themes:

- Questions related to the activities and support offered and whether these are valued?
- Whether activities and support offered encourages them, or not, to move their lives forward?

- Finally, trying to identify what's missing in the provision that could be developed?

At no point will any questions touch on any sensitive issues related to homelessness or personal issues. Should sensitive subjects arise I will move the conversation on and stop the interview.

2. The Observation

The final method used will be observation during a session which is set up for members of the men's football. Although this will depend on whether there is enough time within the research study. It is important to consider how I conduct my observation. I plan to sit at the back and observe the activities offered and levels of engagement.

Sampling strategy

This is a pre-existing group.

Gaining consent

Before the observation I would provide a (PIS) before the session begins (See Appendix C) as well as verbally talking through it's content. I will then seek consent from members (See Appendix D) but will not undertake the observation if there were members who were not happy to give consent, and this would interfere with the session being observed.

Ethical considerations

There is so many issues that need to be covered around ethical considerations, some of which have been suggested by Diener and Crandall (1978, cited by Bryman, 2015: p125) "whether there is harm to participants, whether there is a lack of informed consent, whether there is an invasion of privacy". These issues need to be addressed within the research study. Informed consent will be gained through individuals becoming fully aware of what the research is about and what it will be used for. This information will be explained in detail within the participant information sheets (See Appendix A, B, C). This is where participants are provided with as much information as possible in relation to the research study. Once individuals are clear on what they will be taking part in, then they will be followed up with a participant consent form (See Appendix D). The participant consent form is where access is gained so the research study can proceed.

Before any research takes place, it is important to recruit appropriate participants. Access to participants can be chosen through communicating with the link worker and negotiating as to who will be suitable. It will be the link worker who will know about these individuals and what will be feasible within the time given. Regular negotiation with link worker is necessary throughout the research process making sure the needs of everyone involved are met. The selected participants will be over 18 and must be able to give

their own consent. The participant consent form will also include all information regarding what they are agreeing to, with the option to pull out at any point. If participants decide to withdraw further into the research this may hinder the study. However, it's their right to withdraw at any time (Silverman, 2011),

It must be emphasized that my research is not a sensitive topic which will not include any personal or sensitive questions, however, it has been suggested that 'their involvement may prove stressful to them in some way that could not have been reasonably anticipated' (Robson, 2011:202). To minimise these outcomes, it is important to give the individuals a clear sense of why they are participating in the research study. Also, explaining to them why their contribution will be valuable to the organisation and beneficial to others. Participants will be briefed on how the findings will be presented and where they will feature.

There are minimal risks or harms within my research as it is completely focused on the evaluation of the organisation, however during interviews and observation it is possible participants may disclose sensitive information. Therefore, the link worker has indicated speaking to him regarding such matters, as there are mentors to speak to if such issues arise. I have life experience (I'm a mature student) to draw on if I feel the interview is moving to sensitive areas and I will move the subject on.

It is imperative strict anonymity and confidentiality will be used throughout the research project. The methods used within the research study must be looked at within an ethical context, for example interviews with members of the organisation will be conducted using a careful approach. Any questions asked will be sensitive towards the participants throughout the study. Several questions will be asked as to how the organisation is working? Avoiding leading or probing questions. This is a mutual respect between researcher and participant as all participants should never be coerced. Pseudonymous will be used during data collection from the outset, which will also be included within the participant information sheet. No personal information or raw data will be shared through email or with members of the organisation at any time which also includes the link worker.

Walking interviews and interviews will be audio recorded as it could prove difficult to make notes whilst walking. Although during the walking activity sessions I will be aware of the first names of the members. Each will be given a pseudonymous for the process of transcribing the data, which will be immediately deleted as soon after the feedback is written up, ensuring complete confidentiality.

Anticipated outcomes

During my research I will be collecting data that will eventually form my report. The report I intend to create will be an evaluation of Liverpool Homeless Football Club. This evaluation will include a detailed report on how the service is working. Which will then lead to a proposal of constructive and practical recommendations to help improve the organisation. Improving the

organisation and encouraging new members who are suffering homelessness is the end goal for my research study. Helping its members and potential members will be a beneficial outcome.

Timeline

November 20th/Deadline for project
November/ Attending placement at LHFC, making regular contact with link worker. Also making suitable arrangements for interviews and observation sessions.
December/January Christmas break
January/February Start collecting data
February/March Analysis and writing up first draft
March Hand in first draft to academic supervisor Louise Hardwick
March/April Easter break, will not be available
April: Make final amendments
May 1st May 2018

*PLEASE ADD "YES"
WHERE APPROPRIATE*

- Recruitment advertisement (if appropriate)**
- Participant information sheet(s)**
- Participant Consent form(s)**
- Questionnaires on sensitive topics**
- Themes or questions for interviews/focus group/questionnaire**
- Debriefing material (if appropriate)**
- Other (please specify)**

Appendix A



Participant Information Sheet

For Interview with Volunteer

Evaluation of Liverpool Homeless Football Club: When Football Becomes a Lifeline

Version 1; 15/11/17

You are being invited to take part in this research study. It is important to read through this sheet before agreeing to take part. This is to ensure you understand what the research involves and what it will be used for. Do not hesitate to ask any questions which you are unsure about. Most importantly you do not have to take part in this study if you do not wish to.

Thank you for reading this.

Purpose:

The aim of this research study is to get an up to date picture of how LHFC is working and the service it provides. This will involve researching what is working and maybe not working within the organisation. This process will be looking at the reasons individuals attend LHFC and what can be improved to attract new members.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in this study as once a previous member and know a volunteer your knowledge is important. As you have both perspectives around homelessness and LHFC I would like to hear your views and opinions in relation to the organisation.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this research it is entirely your choice. There is no pressure as to whether you take part or not.

What will happen?

During the research study you will be taking part in an interview which be an hour long and will take place at the office, 151 Dale Street, Liverpool. The interview will be set in a quiet room within the office, the interview will be audio recorded for the data to be transcribed. The questions are all to do with how LHFC functions, and what else may be needed to encourage new member's also potential funders. Your name will not be used within my study to protect your identity. I will use a different name when writing up my data. I will be using some of what you say within my research study, therefore is important you fully understand before giving consent. However, I repeat your identity will never be disclosed. Once data is collected and transcribed all audio recordings will be deleted immediately.

What are the risks?

No risks have been identified within this study, as the interview and questions are all in relation to the programme LHFC provide. All questions are sensitive which will cause no emotional distress to you.

What are the benefits?

With the aim of this study looking to evaluate the programme that LHFC offer. It would be beneficial to all involved for you, others and future funders. Looking to improve the organisation for its members.

Complaints:

If you are unhappy or have any complaints, please feel free to inform Louise Hardwick at louiseha@liverpool.ac.uk who will be supervising the research. If you are still unhappy and would like to take the complaint further, please contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk . When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

Confidentiality

During this study, any information that is recorded during the interview will be stored securely on the University M: Drive. Which will not be shared with anyone else until it is transformed into the research report. All data and information will be kept anonymised to be completely confidential.

Results:

The results of this research study will be used both to help the organisation and for my academic assessment. It will eventually provide some important information that will help to generate future funding for LHFC. A copy of the report will be also given to LHFC and may feature in their annual report.

Withdrawal:

You the participant have every right to not take part in this study, if so can you please let the researcher know as soon as possible. This also applies to you when the research is in progress you can still withdraw from the study. However, once the data is anonymised it will not be possible for data to be destroyed.

Further questions:

If you have any further questions, please email Louise Hardwick:
louiseha@liverpool.ac.uk

Appendix D



Committee on Research Ethics

Participant consent form

Title of Research

Project:

Evaluation of

LHFC – ‘When
Football Becomes
a Lifeline’

Researcher(s): Jane
Owens

**Please
initial
box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 12/11/2017 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer a certain question or questions, I am free to decline at any time.

3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish to.

4. I understand that my participation will be audio recorded and consent to the use of these recordings for no other purposes other than the research, which will be deleted after feedback is transcribed.

5. I understand and agree that once I submit my data it will become anonymised and I will no longer be able to withdraw.

6. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout, and will not be able to identify me in any off the publications.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name

Date

Signature