

London Futures – reducing social isolation through employability and sport

What is London Futures?

London Futures is an employability programme for young Londoners with learning disabilities and mental health problems, facing social isolation and loneliness. Using sport and specialised mentoring, these young Londoners unite to compete in employability challenges to improve their career aspirations and become more integrated in their communities. London Futures objectives are:

1. **To reduce a sense of loneliness** – 1.4 million people in the UK have a learning disability; often considered a ‘forgotten group’ with only 7% in employment; 71% of these work less than 16 hours per week, compared with 74% of non-disabled people in full time work (Health and Social Care Information Centre data 2016).
2. **To improve coping mechanisms for the workplace** – 40% of people with learning disabilities suffer from poor mental health; more than double the rate of mental health problems in the general population (McManus 2016).
3. **To increase integration into the local community** – A survey carried out earlier this year by MENCAP has revealed how almost 1 in 3 young people with a learning disability do not want to leave their houses.
4. **To improve inclusive environments in the workplace** – According to the Social Market Foundation (think-tank May 2018) ‘London is “wasting huge opportunities” to make its economy bigger and fairer because disabled Londoners are not being fully supported into work’.

How does it work?

London Futures in a 12 month programme that is structured in the following way:

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| Weekly sports activities | Young Londoners attend (2 hours) weekly sports activities sessions to reduce anxiety, stress and associated conditions. |
| Weekly mentoring | Young Londoners gain weekly mentoring from a Coach Mentor with lived experience that can advise and guide throughout the programme. |
| Therapeutic support | Young Londoners will have access to specialists from Mind who will support our young Londoners (if/when needed) throughout the programme. |
| 10 monthly employability challenges | Young Londoners will take part in 10 employability challenges and compete as teams: Soapbox challenge – development of public speaking skills through a pitching challenge Interview challenge – development of relationship building skills through a speed interview challenge The apprentice challenge – development of budgeting skills through a buying and selling challenge The give back challenge – volunteering with other Londoners facing barriers The business challenge – learning business development by learning how to set up your own company The media challenge – development of communication skills by setting up a campaign The fix it challenge – development of problem solving skills through a practical puzzle exercises The London challenge – development of navigation skills through a travel challenge around London The ‘boss’ challenge – understanding our own leadership skills through team building exercises The futures challenge – working with an employer to compete in work based tasks and scenarios |

Our ambitions:

- To engage 100 young Londoners over 2 years
- To partner with a range of employers through CSR objectives, staff engagement, mentoring and work placements
- To extend the reach of this exciting London initiative to other cities in the UK