



**Summerhill**

**Boxing & Martial Arts Intervention**

**Case Study**

**Summer & Autumn 2022**

## Introduction

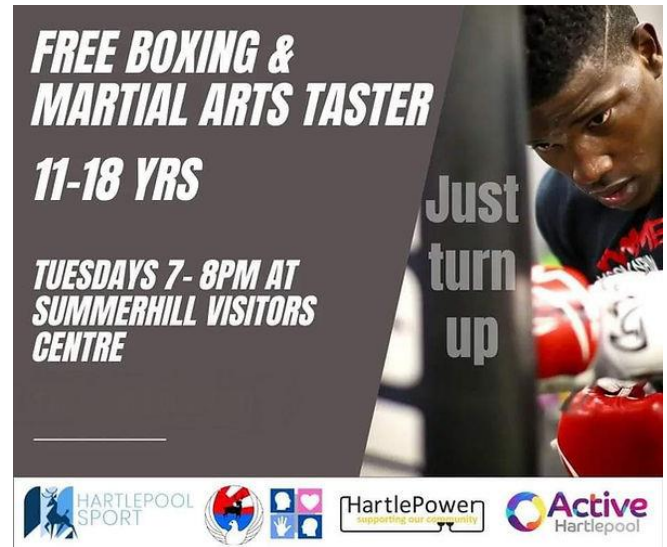
Summerhill is a unique 100-acre country park that is both a Local Nature Reserve and Outdoor Activity Centre managed by Hartlepool Borough Council. The site has a visitors' centre and café space, a boulder park, a BMX cycling course, a closed road cycle circuit and facilities for archery. 'Active Hartlepool' is the physical activity participation team from Hartlepool Borough Council.

Hartlepower is a 'VCSE infrastructure organisation' that supports the sector in a range of ways including with development support and SME incubation space.

Hartlepool Sport CIC is the sport arm of The PFC Trust charity in Hartlepool. Hartlepool Sport works closely with and supports clubs, statutory and VCSE partners to deliver on the preventative agenda.

Hartlepool Wadokai is a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) that delivers Karate and Little Ninja classes from their full time 'dojo' in Hartlepool and delivers several major championships across the region each year.

'Making Sense of' is an organisation seeking to tell a better story around mental and emotional distress.



## Background

Concern over anti-social behaviour and an unfortunate number of suicides amongst young people led to a search for diversionary activities.



The local authority Youth Service outreach teams were already committed to support other activities such as the Department for Education Holiday Activity Fund delivery and didn't have capacity to intervene at Summerhill.

The Hartlepower Development team were approached by Hartlepool Borough Council to support a time limited intervention at Summerhill over the Summer 2022, who then contacted Hartlepool Sport for support.

Hartlepool Sport offered to fund the delivery element as a pilot (on the condition that Summerhill visitors centre was made available in-kind for the duration), and a free Boxing and Martial Arts intervention was proposed that mirrored a similar intervention at Hartlepool College of Further Education. Two partner organisations were recruited to design and deliver the intervention, Hartlepool Wadokai and 'Making Sense Of'. Hartlepool Wadokai also agreed to fund 50% of the delivery element and absorb the liability for the project.

## What was the project?

Two staff members delivered a free weekly Boxing and Martial Arts taster session covering a variety of sport specific skills, fitness & Physical Activity, including some High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT). This created a mini health hub where the expertise of the staff supported young people to solve day to day problems they were facing, whilst keeping them engaged in positive activities and preventing them from getting into trouble in their communities.

Most of the young people were from the Owton Manor area (Manor House Ward), one of the most deprived areas of the town, and several attended the local Horizon school, which is a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), and the majority didn't take part in other activities outside of school time.

A fun environment was created where young people could learn a skill that they wouldn't otherwise have a chance to, in a safe environment. The project leads spent a lot of time highlighting behaviour, role modelling and talking about respect and created conversations with the young people around bullying, belonging, relationships, disability, obesity/body issues, health, and general wellbeing.

Every young person was asked on a one-to-one basis how their day was, at school, at home so they felt acknowledged and valued. Where challenges at home or school were raised, these were discussed one-to-one or in small groups.

The project leads were always talking about the why...

...why safeguarding, talk to the young people.

...why warmups, talk to the young people.

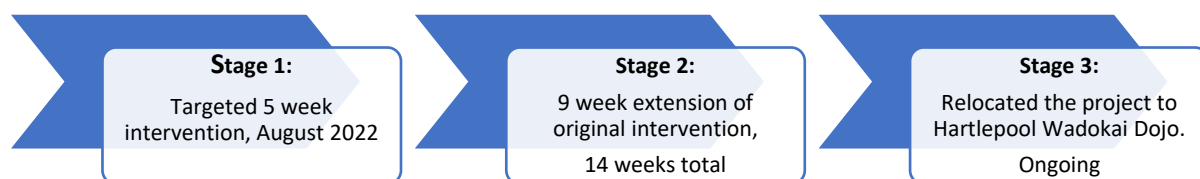
After learning some basics, the sessions were led more by young people. They decided on what drills worked best, which warmups to start with etc... and they were given 'homework' of coming up with new exercises or drills and then they could showcase their ideas with their peers.

For some young people, this was the first time they had ever been trusted by adults to take on any sort of leadership role and they relished the opportunity.

Most young people preferred the pad-work and sparring and other boxing elements over the Martial Arts elements, though there was a lot of overlap.

## Timescales

The intervention went through several stages as it progressed.



## Staff Leads

**Ronnie Bage**, Making Sense of

Ronnie is a behaviour, mental health, and wellbeing specialist. With an extensive background working as a Senior Practitioner (Drugs and Alcohol), Drug Education Officer for a Local Authority and working in prisons and within the probation services. Ronnie works with Hartlepool College of Further Education, at the Horizon School (PRU) as a behaviour specialist and now runs his own company “Withronnie” which specialises in safeguarding, inspiring, motivating and supporting change by improving wellbeing and mental health.

**Harvey Kerridge**, Hartlepool Wadokai

Harvey is a European medallist and an active international-level athlete, being a member of the national Karate Team. He is also the lead “Fight Coach” for Hartlepool Wadokai, coaching and inspiring the next generation of competitors.

## Funding



**Hartlepool Sport**  
staff & equipment



**Hartlepool Wadokai**  
staff, liability insurance



**HARTLEPOOL  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**Hartlepool Borough Council**  
in-kind (venue)

## Recruitment & Marketing

An additional Hartlepool Sport team member, and a member of Hartlepower Development team spent some time walking around Summerhill before and during the project delivery times, talking to children and young people who were in the park, and talked about having a positive place to get out of the rain/wind. As the project progressed, Hartlepool Sport staff continued this walk around the park on an ad-hoc basis.

Social media channels and VCSE newsletters were utilised, but most children and young people attended through word of mouth and bringing their friends.

Ronnie also gave a thorough interview on BBC Tees Radio to discuss the project, and the influence of author Cormac Russell in building villages <http://bit.ly/3levPJc>.

Bikes were stored inside the hall too, which was found to be an important factor in having young people join in.

# Highlights

\*Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

- The young people were often outside in the rain from 5.30pm, waiting for the session to start at 7pm showing how important the sessions became to young people.
- At the start of the intervention, there was a lot of swearing and name calling, and a lot of early work went into embedding positive values, how to respect each other and look out for each other.

David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David’s sibling was taking part in the first few weeks of the program before he started. David’s mother had asked if she could try and bring him along because “he got into trouble for taking a knife to school” and she was really struggling with his behaviour.</li> <li>• David settled in well in the sessions and ended up becoming a positive role model for some of the other young people, encouraging the group and always aiming to out-work everyone else.</li> </ul>
Paul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul, 12-year-old, stopped smoking because of the intervention. Attends the Horizon PRU School. RB had a one-to-one with Paul, as he was struggling with fitness and coughing a lot during the training. Smoking was discussed and the wider health implications, and Paul decided on his own to stop smoking.</li> </ul>
Daisy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Her parents said she wouldn’t stick in, that she would struggle in the group because of her medication and conditions, she doesn’t sleep at night and very disruptive.</li> <li>• She has been amazing in the sessions, she has worked hard, learning and is now very attentive, hardworking and one of the stars of the sessions.</li> </ul>
Teddy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overweight, lacking in confidence and self-esteem, getting bullied in his secondary school.</li> <li>• Because of the one-to-ones and working hard in the training, his confidence has improved, and the bullying has stopped at school because of his improved confidence and because other young people know he “does boxing” now.</li> </ul>
Laura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laura has a disability, can’t run but can get involved because the sessions are adapted and inclusive. She can take part in the pad work etc and feel included in the group and work up a good sweat. Laura and her dad are thrilled that she has been able to take part in these sessions.</li> </ul>

# Attendance

## Active Attendance

- 31 unique young people, with an average attendance per week of between 10-25.

## Passive Attendance

- An additional 12 young people regularly attended the sessions but didn't join in alongside their friends who were doing the session. These young people were supporters and cheerleaders and were happy to be in the hall, involved and interacting with everyone as a safe, warm, and dry place to hang out. The coaches still were able to interact with these young people and check-in with them, talking about their day, wellbeing etc...

# Additional in-kind support

Andy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andy is one of the grandparents of one of the original attendees. His grandson has switched to Rugby on the same evening, but Andy has stuck around volunteering each week, looking after the kit and timer for drills.</li> <li>• Andy has found this really rewarding because he was lonely, and he feels empowered by having a positive role.</li> </ul>
Iain & Kelly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iain from Let's Connect / "Making Sense of" attended many of the sessions as an extra pair of hands, and as additional expert for supporting wellbeing.</li> <li>• Kelly from Hartlepool Sport also attended several sessions and supported with delivery and recruiting young people from across the country park.</li> </ul>
Kieran & Lewis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17 years old, both attend Hartlepool College of Further Education, and the boxing session there.</li> <li>• It was recognised that they were both quiet and have benefited from taking an active leadership role.</li> </ul>

# Parental involvement

- Most young people made their own way to the sessions, as they would be hanging around at Summerhill anyway.
- Half a dozen young people were regularly dropped off at the sessions.
- Parents give information on the young people, they also give an insight into how things are at home, parents separating, so the coaches were able to talk to the young people about these challenges.

## What could have been better?

The project was a success by any measure, as it was well supported by partners and young people alike, but as with all projects, there is always room for improvement.

- Young People reported that access to the Summerhill visitor's centre wasn't welcoming, and the Young People weren't valued as entry was through a side door. Young people had to wait outside, often in the rain.
- Multiple examples of the Young People not being allowed to use the toilets whilst waiting for the session to start, with staff "closing the doors in the faces" of the young people.
- Entering via the side door sometimes made the floor slippery and unsafe, especially when it was raining outside. No doormat was provided so the coaches had to clean and dry the floor on multiple occasions.
- The Summerhill Caretaker didn't support the sessions or add value to the classes, which felt like a missed opportunity had they been a qualified and experienced Youth Worker instead.
- The Summerhill Staff/Venue wouldn't store the boxing & martial arts equipment on site – 2 holdalls worth. This meant that Andy (the kit man, volunteer) was taking the equipment home and bringing it back each week.
- More variety of equipment, bags on the wall etc would have been beneficial and allowed a greater content to be delivered.
- Some of the footwork drills were too advanced as this was the first formal training that some of them have done.
- It would have been useful to have built a relationship with local Police teams by perhaps having some PCSOs coming along and joining in the sessions alongside the Young People.
- A baseline measure from the Young People, followed up at each stage could have been providing important and useful intelligence, especially if linked to DCMS objectives and/or the Youth Endowment Framework.
- A baseline measure of ASB in the area before, during and after the intervention would have been informative.

## Next Steps

Hartlepool Borough Council were unable to continue providing the venue in-kind into the Winter, so the decision was made, in consultation with the young people from the project, to move the session.

- Hartlepool Wadokai have agreed to continue to host the sessions going forward, and will provide free meals, drinks, and snacks for all attendee and add a greater range of activities.
- Hartlepool Wadokai have secured some funding from the Sport England Tackling Inequalities Fund via Sported to match-fund this project alongside Hartlepool Sport.
- Establish boxing specific exit routes for those more interested in progressing with boxing.
- Invite World Champion, Savannah Marshall to the sessions to inspire the young people.

**There is a lot of evidence to show that Sport based interventions are highly successful in tackling serious crime and is a high priority area for Hartlepool Sport going forward.**

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**This project met 4 of the 17 goals.**

Hartlepool Sport and The PFC Trust support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. For more information, visit <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.





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