

THE WAY FORWARD

Free Football & Fitness | 1-to-1 Mentoring | Mental Health Support

Building Stronger Futures for Young Men in Bradford (Ages 18–24)

The Way Forward is a structured 12-week personal development programme supporting young men aged 18–24 in Bradford who may be facing barriers around identity, confidence, wellbeing, and access to employment or education.

The programme provides a safe, supportive environment where participants can reconnect with purpose, develop resilience, and build the practical skills needed to progress into employment, education, training, or volunteering. Participants will also be supported to identify positive role models who can help sustain the outcomes achieved during the programme and provide positive influences beyond their time on the programme.

Through a combination of free football and multi-sport sessions, structured workshops, mentoring, and mental health support, participants strengthen their physical wellbeing while developing confidence, discipline, and life skills.

Many young men in our communities struggle with a loss of identity, direction, and opportunity. The Way Forward aims to address this by creating positive peer networks, connecting participants with trusted mentors, and providing access to organisations that can support their long-term development.

By the end of the programme, participants will have:

- Increased confidence and self-belief
- Improved mental health awareness and resilience
- Stronger communication and emotional intelligence
- Greater financial awareness and life skills
- Improved employability and career readiness
- Clearer understanding of pathways into employment, education, training, work placements, or volunteering and the next steps to access them

Following the completion of the structured 12-week programme, participants are encouraged to remain connected through an ongoing peer support model delivered through the weekly Friday football and skill building sessions. These sessions provide a consistent, informal space where young men can continue to build relationships, access support, and maintain the positive routines established during the programme. For many participants, who may have experienced challenges around trust, belonging, or relationships, the opportunity to remain part of a trusted peer network is a vital element of long-term wellbeing and personal development. By sustaining these connections beyond the formal programme, The Way Forward ensures that participants continue to feel supported, valued, and connected to a community that promotes resilience, accountability, and positive progression.

Programme Structure

Week 1 – Identity, Role Models & Expectations (Darrel) – 1st May after Graduation

Participants explore what it means to be a positive role model and reflect on their personal values and identity. The group collaboratively develops a programme code of conduct, promoting accountability and respect. Participants also co-design a reward and incentive structure that recognises attendance, effort, and commitment.

Week 2 – Health, Wellbeing & Discipline (Matthew/Pav) – 8th May

A session focused on the connection between physical health, routine, discipline, and mental wellbeing. Participants explore strategies for emotional regulation, resilience, and developing healthy daily habits.

Week 3 – Financial Confidence & Money Management (Matthew/Pav) – 15th May

Participants are introduced to budgeting, financial planning, and responsible money management, helping reduce financial stress and build confidence in managing personal finances.

Week 4 – Personal Development & Emotional Intelligence (Matthew/Pav) – 22nd May

Developing self-awareness, emotional literacy, and communication skills. Participants learn techniques for stress management, conflict resolution, and maintaining a positive mindset.

Week 5 – Talk Your Walk: Foundations & Safe Spaces – 29th May

Delivered by Talk Your Walk, an organisation dedicated to improving mental health through open conversations and cultural understanding. This session creates a safe space for participants to share experiences, build trust, and understand the importance of expressing emotions in a healthy way.

Week 6 – Talk Your Walk: Leadership & Future Focus – 5th June

Building on the previous session, participants explore leadership, personal responsibility, and the impact they can have within their communities. The focus is on developing positive influence and long-term thinking.

Week 7 – Vision Boards & Personal Goal Setting (Pav) - 12th June

Participants create a personal vision board to map their future goals and aspirations. This visual exercise helps identify pathways into education, careers, health, and personal growth.

Week 8 – Confidence Building with (WEA) - 19th June – 3 Hours

Delivered by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), one of the UK's largest adult education charities founded in 1903. WEA specialises in providing accessible learning opportunities that build confidence, skills, and personal development, helping individuals recognise their abilities and potential.

Week 9 – Employability Skills & Work Preparation (WEA) - 26th June – 3 Hours

Participants gain practical support with CV writing, personal statements, job applications, and interview preparation. The session also introduces opportunities for work placements, volunteering, and further training, helping participants take their next steps towards employment.

Week 10 – Ignite Mindset (Online Session) (Jon) – 3rd July

Delivered online, Ignite Mindset focuses on developing the mental foundations for performance, motivation, and resilience. Participants learn practical strategies to strengthen focus, overcome setbacks, and maintain a growth mindset.

Week 11 – Reflection, Leadership & Graduation Preparation (Pav) – 10th July

Participants reflect on their progress, celebrate their achievements, and prepare for the next stage of their journey. The programme concludes with a graduation event co-designed by participants, recognising their accomplishments and providing an opportunity for them to share their experiences with future cohorts as positive role models. Discussions also focus on maintaining positive habits and encouraging participants to support future groups as mentors.

Week 12 – Graduation & Community Celebration 17th July – Introducing Cohort 4

The programme concludes with a graduation and celebration event, bringing together participants, partners, and community members. Participants share their journeys, recognise achievements, and formally join the Way Forward alumni network, ensuring continued connection and support.

The Way Forward is more than a programme it is a pathway that helps young men rediscover confidence, purpose, and direction while building stronger communities.

Programme Legacy

The Way Forward extends beyond the 12-week programme through a sustained peer support model that maintains connection, trust, and positive engagement. Graduates are invited to continue attending the weekly Friday football and wellbeing sessions, providing a consistent and supportive space to maintain positive routines, strengthen peer networks, and access ongoing guidance.

This continued engagement is particularly important for young people whose previous experiences may have impacted their trust and relationships, ensuring they remain connected to a positive and reliable support system. Participants also have opportunities to progress into peer mentor and role model roles, helping to inspire and support future cohorts while reinforcing the long-term impact of the programme.