



COMMUNITY TRUST
At The Heart Of The Community

CHARLTON UPBEATS

Evaluation Report 2022



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Charlton Athletic
Community Trust



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
METHODOLOGY	2
COVID-19 RESPONSE	3
BOB BOLDER'S BIKE RIDE	4
UPBEATS KITCHEN & NEW PROJECTS	5
SOCIAL VALUE	6
JASON PEARCE	7
OUTCOMES/FEEDBACK	8
CASE STUDY 1	10
CASE STUDY 2	12
CONCLUSION	13

INTRODUCTION

Charlton Athletic Community Trust is a non-profit organisation that operates in South East London and areas of Kent delivering a variety of projects and activities that aim to bring about social change.

The Charlton Upbeats started in 2008 for children, young people, and adults with Down's syndrome. As a self-funded programme delivered by Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT), the success of the Charlton Upbeats is widely celebrated; becoming a pillar in the Charlton community and fans favourite among Charlton Athletic supporters. The success stems from their ability and love of football, shown by winning the National Down's Syndrome Football Championship on nine occasions and their participation in the Kent Adult Disability League. However, the achievements on the pitch are only a small part of the Charlton Upbeats. Activities such as off-site trips, leisure activities, overnight stays, social events, and the new Upbeats Kitchen at The Valley showcase how the programme has provided an improved quality of life for each of the families involved. More than 150 participants have been part of the Upbeats over the years, with 30 regular attendees in 2021-2022.

The Charlton Upbeats programme aims to allow people with Down's syndrome to reach their full potential by providing them with opportunities to learn and develop basic skills in football, offering a clear pathway for young people into senior competitive football. The programme also provides the participants and their families the chance to meet new people, grow their social circle, and share experiences with others in a safe and fun environment.

Active fundraising events take part throughout each year for the Charlton Upbeats. This includes the annual Upbeats Walk where hundreds of people support by walking 9 miles from the football club's training ground at Sparrows Lane to The Valley.

All funds raised stay with the Charlton Upbeats and help to support the costs of kit, travel, fees for tournaments, and regular sessions and activities. The Upbeats Walk has raised at least £15,000 every year, including an outstanding £27,000 in April 2020 and £24,500 in 2019.



METHODOLOGY

To formulate this evaluation report, several data collection methods were used including quantitative and qualitative research. Parents and families of the participants were interviewed to gain a greater understanding of the impact that the Charlton Upbeats have had on their son/daughter and their family unit. Key themes covered in the survey collection included respite opportunities, an improvement in behaviour and attitude, social skills, and emotional and physical wellbeing.

Additionally, parents and extended family members were provided the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings on the Charlton Upbeats programme and how it has been beneficial to their son/daughter. From the data collected and the outcomes achieved, we have been able to calculate the Social Return on Investment (SROI) by using a validated tool of assessment from the Sport Value Bank, an adapted sport version from the HACT Social Value Bank model.



COVID-19 RESPONSE

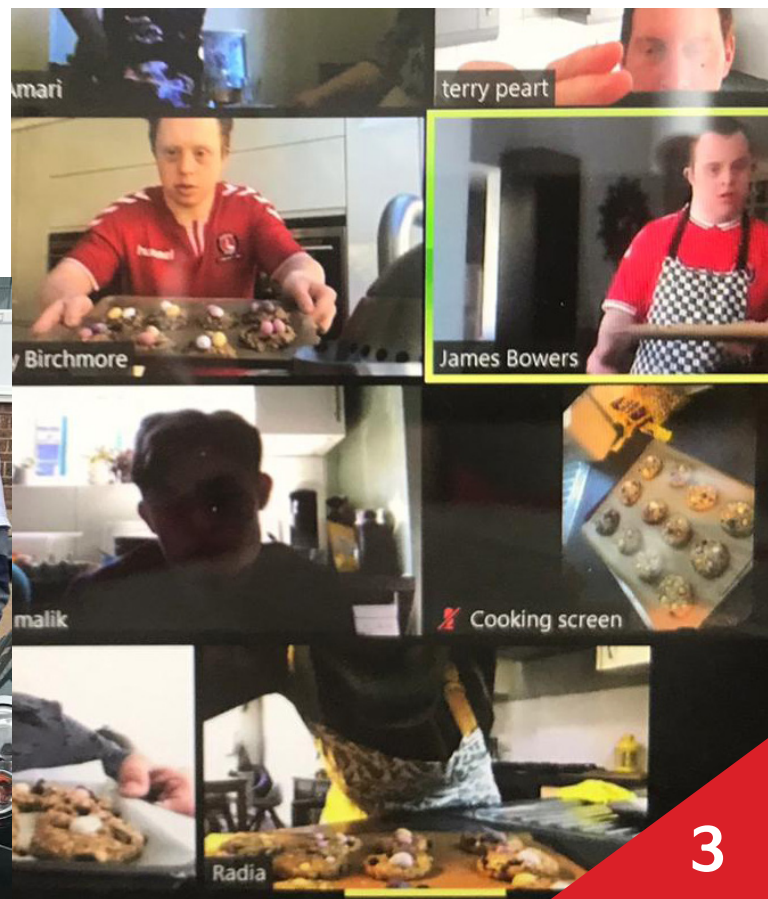
The COVID-19 pandemic caused enormous and unprecedented problems for everyone across society whilst people suffered through lockdown. For the Charlton Upbeats, isolation was incredibly challenging and the risk to health was higher due to their vulnerabilities. CACT recognised early that being adaptable and offering help in any way possible was going to be fundamental in helping the Charlton Upbeats through the challenges of lockdown.

Some of the initial activities that took place included befriending where CACT staff organised socially distanced visits to ensure the Charlton Upbeats and their families received the support they needed. This was complemented by CACT delivering food parcels and other necessities to the families that were classed as high-risk.

CACT knew that with lockdown forcing a sudden and dramatic change in routine and physical and emotional engagement, the Charlton Upbeats would struggle more. As opportunities allowed, online virtual sessions were delivered to two groups in the evenings over Zoom.

Activities included cooking and a healthy eating workshop, a boxing session in partnership with local provider 'Champions4Change', a fitness session with 'Stand-Fit Fitness', a disco, and bingo which Thomas Sandgaard joined from his home in Colorado.

As restrictions eased, CACT introduced adapted face-to-face sessions that included specific timed slots and a chance for the Charlton Upbeats to engage in physical activities. Two small groups returned weekly on a Saturday at the training ground, and measures were put in place to ensure there were minimal cross-interaction between the Charlton Upbeats and their families. For those who remained a higher risk, CACT staff offered different roles away from session participation.



BOB BOLDER'S BIKE RIDE

Charlton Athletic legend, Bob Bolder, is no stranger to a challenge, always willing to go the extra mile for the Club and CACT.

In September 2021, after months of rigorous training for 2 to 3 hours a day, Bob completed the iconic 1000 mile 9-day 'Deloitte Ride Across Britain' cycle challenge from Land's End to John O'Groats, raising much-needed funds for the Charlton Upbeats. The challenge included spending up to 12 hours a day on the bike before finally finishing the challenge in the far north of Scotland on the ninth day. Over £7000 was donated, smashing the original target of £5000, helping to keep the programme running for another 12 months.

Bob regularly works with the Charlton Upbeats and has a fantastic relationship with them and their families.

Prior to the challenge, Bob said,

"It's going to be tough but I'm proud to have been a part of this football club as a player, a CACT community coach, and a match day host for 35 years. It's important to support CACT's great work and, of course, we all love the Upbeats, don't we?!"



UPBEATS KITCHEN & NEW PROJECTS

The Charlton Upbeats opened their own kitchen at The Valley on 7th December 2021, helping to feed supporters on matchdays.

Located in the Club's Covered End lower concourse, the new kiosk kitchen works in partnership with the Club's catering team, Gather & Gather. Members of the Charlton Upbeats team have been serving food ranging from soup to burgers. The opening of the kitchen further highlights the success and importance of the Charlton Upbeats as it encourages independence, improves confidence, and develops key life skills.

The Charlton Upbeats team have been praised by Gather & Gather,

Moving forward, the Charlton Upbeats will have a new project to get stuck into and further enhance their skills. In the weeks following the annual Upbeats Walk, a new Upbeats Garden will officially open. Situated at the Club's training ground, the garden will offer a variety of facilities such as raised planters and flower beds, a herb garden, fruit trees, and a seating area. The Charlton Upbeats and their families will have the opportunity to upkeep the Upbeats Garden, plant new flowers, develop their skills and knowledge away from the football pitch.

"It's been absolutely amazing. I can speak on behalf of all my team that we have felt so rewarded in the last few weeks since we have been working with the lads. They're a cracking team and a cracking bunch of lads to the point that I'm trying to employ them in other roles within our team. Their technical skills and enthusiasm are brilliant and they're an absolute pleasure to have around. They're more than welcome to be in our kitchen every day of the week."



SOCIAL VALUE



Social Return on Investment – 1:11.7
Net Benefit – £270,923

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a recognised and rigorous approach for charities and community organisations to measure their impact by attaching a financial value to its achievements. The SROI means that for every £1 spend, the ratioed figure is what that specific programme gave back to the participants and the community in social value. For the purposes of this report, CACT used the Sport Value Bank tool, a method derived from the HACT Model, to attribute financial values on the outcomes achieved in the Charlton Upbeats programme.

Key outcomes achieved from the Charlton Upbeats programme to calculate the SROI:

- Gained part time employment
- Gained independence
- Moved from inactive to actively engaging in sport

Figures were adjusted for the dates of delivery, costings due to the date and activities, the number of participants per outcome achieved, the area activities were delivered, and the area's rate of deprivation on a linear scale.

Net Benefit is the total social value produced from the outcomes achieved minus the running costs of the programme. The figure produced for each outcome originates from a validated and thorough algorithm and accumulates their social value by the amount of money that would otherwise need to be spent to achieve the same outcome away from the programme.

JASON PEARCE

Jason Pearce is the Charlton Athletic PFA Disability Ambassador and has previously been involved with the Charlton Upbeats programme and other disability teams. When asked for his thoughts on the Charlton Upbeats, **Pearce said,**

“Playing for Charlton Athletic means I represent everyone connected with the Club and the community. The work done in the community by Charlton Athletic Community Trust for people with a disability is brilliant, so I am always happy to support fantastic programmes like the Charlton Upbeats.

Being a family club, the community plays such a big part in that. Opportunities for people with disabilities, and in the Upbeats’ case Down’s syndrome, are much harder to come by and I think we value giving those opportunities to others more than most football clubs. The new Upbeats Kitchen gives some of them the chance for paid work on a matchday which helps them develop new skills and it’s something we take a lot of pride in.

We’re really thankful for the support the Upbeats give to us, and the Club. They bring so much joy and their smiles, they make you feel good and they’re great to have around. Unfortunately, with COVID lockdowns and restrictions, we haven’t been able to engage in-person as much as we would have liked but we continued to support the Upbeats virtually throughout the year with Q&A’s and dancing competitions. Going forward, hopefully we will be able to interact with them a lot more.”



OUTCOMES/FEEDBACK

91%

Feel the Charlton Upbeats provided crucial respite opportunities

96%

Improved and strengthened their relationship with their son/daughter

96%

Feel happier since attending the Charlton Upbeats

98%

Improved their behaviour and attitude since attending the Charlton Upbeats

98%

Improved their physical wellbeing

100%

Improved their social skills and made new friends and improved their emotional wellbeing

100%

Recommend Charlton Upbeats to other families

IMPROVED SOCIAL SKILLS AND SUPPORT

"We are one whole community and are all there for each other. The acceptance and family feel amongst everyone with the Charlton Upbeats you wouldn't experience elsewhere. The support and understanding of each other's situations have been incredible"

"William lives for Saturdays and the Charlton Upbeats. He loves getting together with his friends every week and playing football which is his passion. Football is very important to him but so is the social interaction with his peers. As a parent I enjoy the weekly interaction with other parents, the support and understanding allow us to share our experiences and that can't be measured"

"Since coming to the Charlton Upbeats, we have all made a lot of friends and knowing that we are not alone in my experiences and difficulties but have received all the help we could ask for. Everyone is very supportive"

"By providing positive activities and engaging with other Upbeats, my son has improved his social skills, become more confident and improved his concentration and focus. It has also allowed us as a family to have time of respite whilst enjoying the support from the Upbeats community and incredible staff"

IMPROVED EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING

“Since my son started the Charlton Upbeats, he has improved dramatically. His communication and ability to make friends has been wonderful to see develop but attending acts like a therapy. It keeps his emotional and mental wellbeing in check and improves his physical health and fitness so much”

“My son’s cognitive, gross and fine motor skills have improved as his football skills have developed, along with the other opportunities for physical activities that CACT have enabled him to take part in. He has made new friends which, alongside the aforementioned opportunities, has greatly improved his sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and not least his speech”

“Coming to the Charlton Upbeats has enabled my son to improve his football skills, fitness, and coordination. He now has the ability to take instructions, work together with others and has learnt how to cope with the emotions of winning and losing. The Charlton Upbeats is the perfect place for development in all ways, it’s been amazing seeing our son grow in confidence and to be emotionally and mentally happier”

RECEIVED POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT FROM STAFF

“The patience and skill the coaches showed to work round our son’s initial resistance showed great understanding. Our son is now fully attentive during sessions and during a particularly difficult time for our son behaviourally and emotionally, the team went out of their way to address his issues and he now displays greater self-control”

“Staff are friendly, professional, and responsive. We are always sure our son is in safe hands and will be treated with respect. Everything is delivered in a focused but fun way”

“We don’t know what we would have done without the Charlton Upbeats. The support CACT provide is amazing, words cannot describe it. Everyone is so friendly, approachable, understanding, and always encouraging learning and development”

“Staff are phenomenal, we are so lucky to be involved with the Charlton Upbeats and that is in no small part due to the staff. They’re non-judgemental, they understand the issues and challenges we face, they push to learn and to enjoy more than football skills but skills they can take away and use elsewhere. Throughout lockdown they showed how much they care and continue to share as much passion for the Upbeats as the Upbeats have towards them”

CASE STUDY 1

Perry has been a Charlton Upbeat since the programme started in 2008. Going to mainstream school meant that partaking in football and tournaments was difficult as he didn't have the skills in the same way as his friends and peers. Perry's love and passion for the game could not be halted though, and after spending years looking for something suitable that aligned with his needs and abilities, Perry's family stumbled across the Charlton Upbeats and have never looked back. Being part of the successful teams to be crowned National Down's Syndrome Champions helped fuel that love and passion further and Perry's mum, Victoria, expressed her feelings of how the Charlton Upbeats have helped Perry and his development,

"We live over an hour away but being part of the Charlton Upbeats makes every minute worth travelling. What CACT provide to all of us has far exceeded anything you could imagine of a football team. We would never have this feeling, atmosphere, and family feel elsewhere. The things we all take for granted in everyday life, CACT have provided it for the Charlton Upbeats. I can't begin to explain how much that does for Perry and for us as a family."

Unfortunately, Perry's health has deteriorated over time meaning that when the pandemic and the lockdown struck, Perry was high risk, vulnerable, and as a family had to be very careful. This resulted in an extremely gruelling 14 months of isolation. However, CACT stepped up and recognised the importance of ensuring the Charlton Upbeats and their families felt supported throughout the difficult period of isolation,

"Jason Morgan, Carl, and Terry came along during lockdown to check in and that meant more to the families and the boys than they will ever realise. To not be forgotten about, to show how they genuinely care, and always being kind and considerate is so special".

CACT knew that maintaining contact and a level of engagement was vital as the struggles of lockdown and worries of health were amplified for the Charlton Upbeats and their families. Perry took part in the adapted virtual sessions and when restrictions and health allowed, CACT delivered a specialised smaller group to tailor to the needs of the Charlton Upbeats who were more vulnerable,

"This was amazing because we never felt it was ever any bother or added stress. They do everything they can to accommodate us, even offering Perry a chance to help out in a coaching position whilst he was unable to join in with the other Upbeats due to his personal health situation".



The impact of the Charlton Upbeats programme extends further than the participant improving their physical and emotional wellbeing or enjoying and developing their football skills. The Charlton Upbeats have provided participants with employment opportunities at the Upbeats Kitchen, helping to encourage a sense of independence and paid work, and they have helped to improve the quality of life of participants' family members too. Victoria explained,

“Perry takes part in the Upbeats Kitchen but needed extra support. Terry provided that without hesitation whilst CACT organised match tickets for us to attend to ensure we were on hand if Perry needed anything. That level of understanding and acknowledgement of our needs as a family is what separates CACT from the rest”.

Perry's sister has also directly benefitted from the Charlton Upbeats too, volunteering on a weekly basis for 13 years led to CACT supporting her through gaining qualifications such as the FA Level One and completing work experience with the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust. Additionally, she was the first person to win The Mirror's Pride of Sport Volunteer of the Year Award and Victoria explained the support received by CACT to her daughter has

“literally been life changing”.



CASE STUDY 2

A Charlton Upbeat for 7 years, Joe and his family first found out about the programme through another parent that they knew from activities away from CACT. Joe was involved in a dance programme but his eligibility to attend finished when he turned 25 so was keen to find another programme to replace it,

“When we heard about the Charlton Upbeats, Joe wanted to come and try it and as soon as he did, he only wanted to attend this fantastic programme. He used to do skiing as well but was no longer interested. He’s always loved football but to be part of a team was like heaven for him!”.

Joe, 33, lives in supported accommodation away from his Mum and extended family, possessing the skills to be an independent person. However, as was the case for many, the struggles of COVID and the risk of being isolated put enormous pressure on Joe and his family – forcing them to make the decision that he would move back home; this lasted for 13 months.

“When virtual sessions became available, Joe loved it and thankfully being very good with technology, he was able to engage and maintain his interest throughout. Each session gave him something to look forward to which was so very important for his mental health and focus”.

As soon as he could, Joe wanted to resume his active routine and lifestyle, taking part in a range of activities like swimming, dance, table tennis, and cookery, pushing to gain the sense of normality again.

“He gets himself to the training ground and I meet him here when he wants me to. Joe used to be supported by staff but has gained the confidence, understanding, and independence to travel on his own and that’s something we all hoped for. The Upbeats have been amazing in helping him achieve that”.

Joe’s level of independence has grown more since becoming a Charlton Upbeat as not only does he travel to and from sessions on his own, he also is a member of the Upbeats Kitchen on a matchday, something that provides him with added responsibility, and he absolutely loves it. Joe also works one afternoon a week at a school where he helps to teach, showing a varied skillset that improves his ability to successfully manoeuvre through each day. His involvement in the Charlton Upbeats has provided a routine and a sense of organisation to help Joe develop crucial life skills after an incredibly challenging period of lockdown and isolation,

“Remembering his uniform, the time he needs to start, the time he needs to leave, to have a shave before leaving, all the things we all would take for granted, it provides him with structure which for him is as important as the work duties themselves. Being part of the Charlton Upbeats family has been absolutely wonderful, they’ve been brilliant.”

CONCLUSION

The Charlton Upbeats has continued to develop and evolve despite the challenges imposed on the Upbeats, their families, and the staff to deliver a successful programme following COVID and its restrictions. New outcomes achieved and highlighted in this report show a hugely positive social and economical impact to the Upbeats, their families, and the wider Charlton Upbeats community. These include:

- **Gained part time employment**
- **Improved confidence and independence**
- **Improved physical health**
- **Improved mental and emotional wellbeing**
- **Improved social skills**

A real highlight of success is that several Upbeats have gained part-time employment through the new Upbeats Kitchen at Charlton Athletic on a matchday. Moving forward, additional opportunities will be available such as the upcoming Upbeats Garden at the Club's training ground.

Following the success of the programme, CACT continue to strive for further improvements and maintain their commitment in providing quality support and opportunities to the Charlton Upbeats and their families.



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE UPBEATS

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THE DOWN'S SYNDROME SPORTS CLUB

