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VOICE

# #FOOTBALLUNITES: YOUNG VOICES REPORT

A summary of London Football Academy players' views and experience of community issues.



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
WEST HAM  
UNITED AND CRYSTAL  
PALACE F.C





## OVERVIEW

### #FootballUnites Project

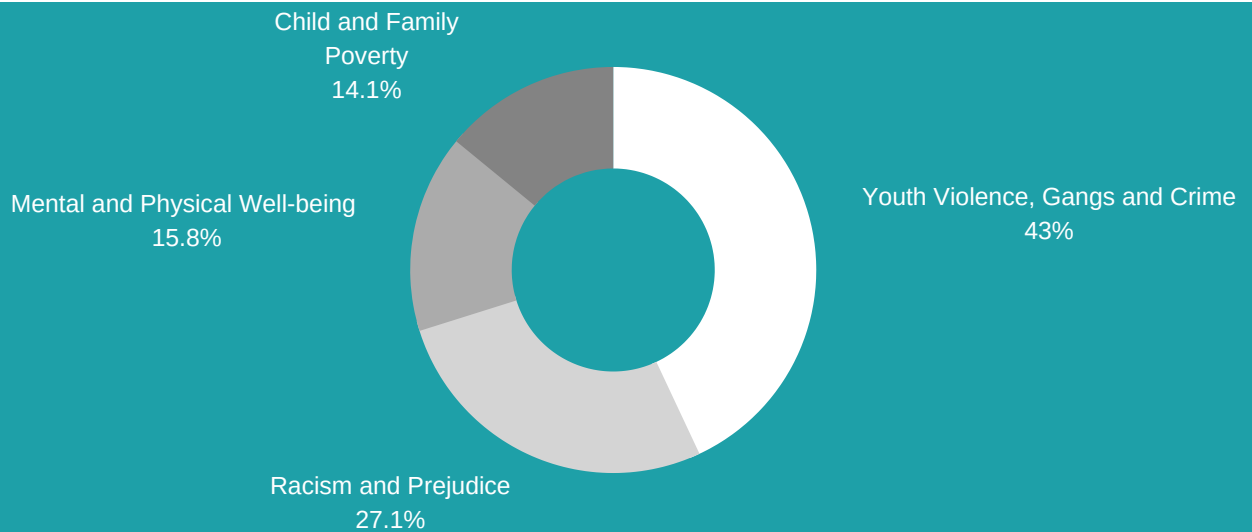
In 2019, Player Voice joined forces with Crystal Palace F.C. and West Ham United F.C. to begin the #FootballUnites Project. Supported by the Mayor of London, #FootballUnites is a one-year pilot project which engages young academy players in planning, delivering and evaluating a community participation project in partnership with their chosen community partner organisation. Focusing on solving an issue young players feel is heavily impacting their local community in London, the #FootballUnites project recognises the unlimited benefit sports and sport institutions can provide for local communities. A key principle of the project is to be 'player-led', providing an opportunity for players to design and deliver a community project that addresses the social issue of concern they have identified. Academy players have formed 'Leadership Groups' who are spearheading the charge in their clubs.

## ENGAGING ACADEMY PLAYERS

As part of meaningful participation and embedding player voice into social action, Leadership Groups at both clubs surveyed academy players from across their sites to collate a ballot of opinion and determine social issues of most concern to them in London. Below are the top line results and the perspective of young players involved in their communities. The results will shape the project these young players work on with community partners, as they attempt to utilise the power of sport to bring communities together, reducing social isolation and enhancing social integration outcomes for London. This is all part of the Mayor of London's 'Sports Unites' manifesto commitment.

# WEST HAM UNITED ACADEMY BALLOT RESULTS

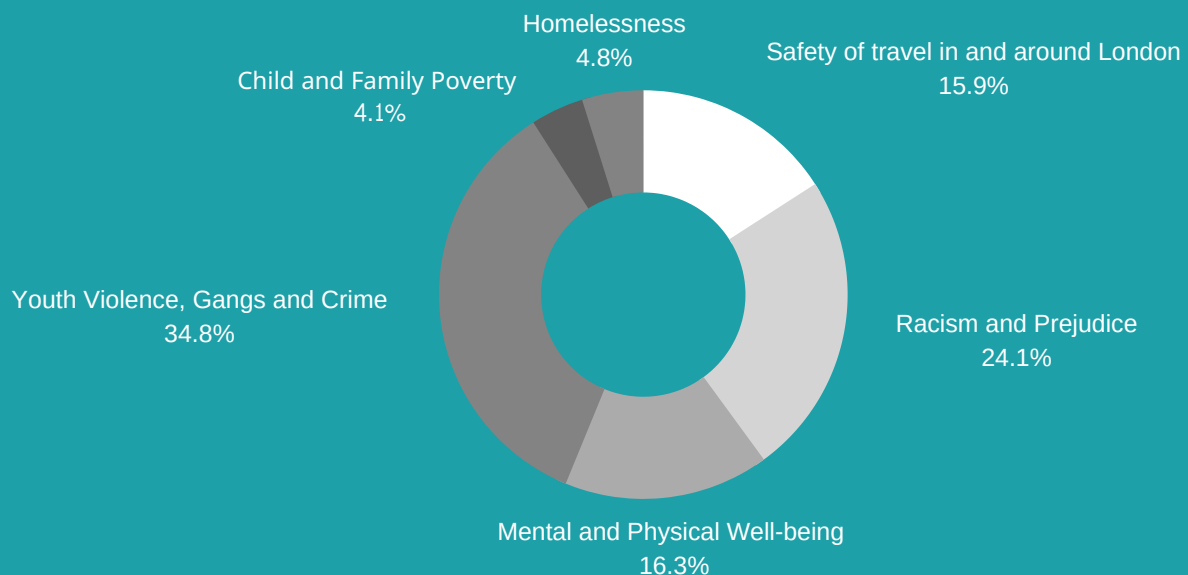
117 players took part in ballot overall - 22 Player Leadership Group members and 95 players via online surveys. All who took part in the survey were between the ages of 9-18 and primarily based in and around the London area. Participants were presented with 4 key issues from which to choose from based on experience.



# CPFC ACADEMY BALLOT RESULTS

154 academy players took part in this ballot. An initial ballot took place for the Player Leadership Group to identify top issues to put forward for surveying the rest of the Academy.

In the CPFC ballot, academy players were given two votes each resulting in 308 responses from 154 respondents.



# VOICES IN ACTION

The Player Leadership Groups' first role was to consult with their academy peers and in total 271 players participated in the ballot across both clubs. This was achieved by player and staff consultation, parent involvement and online engagement. Despite the clubs being based in different areas of London, the same three issues ranked top place at each Academy:

- Youth Violence, Gangs and Crime
- Racism and other forms of discrimination and prejudice
- Mental and physical health and well-being

At sessions in City Hall, players presented and expressed their views and opinions about the ballot results to the London Mayor's Sports Team, as well as advisers from the Youth Violence Reduction Team. Both clubs' academy players focused on youth violence as it was the top issue, shared thoughts on the underlying causes leading to these problems in the capital, and discussed the part that their Football Unites projects can play in tackling these issues within communities.

Players expressed the links between most of the top issues identified; highlighting how youth violence links with poverty or homelessness, and advocated for a more collaborative approach regarding education and pathways for young people. During the City Hall discussions many views were confidently shared:

**"People who have lived in communities with gangs or been a part of community problems are part of the solution, we need to engage them, ask them what they think the solution is, what should be done to stop violence escalating. The Government needs to engage with people who have experience'.**

Following the meetings at City Hall, players begin their selection of a community partner, and together they will devise, deliver and evaluate their project.

The #FootballUnites project aims to assess the value social action and advocacy bring to players, clubs and communities, and shape a framework for social action and player participation which other football clubs and sporting organisations can adapt and use in their own settings.





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The **#FootballUnites** project is a pilot project created and managed by Player Voice CIC in partnership with Crystal Palace F.C. and West Ham United F.C., with advisory support from Arsenal F.C. and the Premier League.

**Player Voice** is a community interest company, enabling children and young people's views and ideas to be heard regarding their education and sporting development, with their safety always in mind.

To find out more visit:  
[www.playervoice.org.uk/football-unites/](http://www.playervoice.org.uk/football-unites/)



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