



# **Crossworld**

## **Evaluation of current projects**

Dr. Craig Berry

June 2012

Photographs by Carmel King

## **Preface**

Tipping our hats to the great F.C. Barcelona, our aim at Crossworld is to be more than a football club. Looking back on the past year, it is clear that this has been one in which Crossworld has been incredibly successful, not only as a football club, but in being much more besides.

First, we became a registered charity. It all happened extremely quickly, but early in 2011, after two years as an independent community organisation, we decided that Crossworld's interests were best served if we applied to become a registered charity. Charitable status was achieved in April 2011, marking the culmination of two years of work building up Crossworld from scratch. I was particularly delighted that Crossworld's founding trustees were Julian Wild, Matthew Terdre and me. The three of us were the original volunteers that founded Crossworld as an independent community project in May 2009. Furthermore, I was delighted that we were joined as trustees by Arnaud Vervoitte, a long-term supporter of Crossworld within the Refugee Council, and Peter Mwangi, our long-serving football club captain and now volunteer coach. This blend of expertise, dynamism, drive, commitment, and experience will ensure that Crossworld is led effectively over the coming years.

Second, we really did become more than a football club, taking over full responsibility for running the Refugee Council's weekly drop-in football project, the Friday Project, in July 2011. There have always been good links between the Friday Project and Crossworld's Football Club Project, but we believe that there are huge benefits to be had from Crossworld having overall responsibility for both projects. There is much in this report that we can use to deliver Friday Project activities even more effectively. Indeed, we are already putting in place plans to offer coaching opportunities and more competitive football to Friday Project participants.

Third, this year has also been a memorable one for our original project, the Football Club Project. In May, Crossworld Football Club secured its first promotion, to the London Football League Saturday PM Premier League. A host of other awards followed, including the League's awards for Best Attack, Top Scorer and Player of the Season. On a glorious sunny day in May, Crossworld lifted their first trophy winning the Saturday PM Plate with a 2-1 over rivals AFC Fanatics. The award that I am most pleased that Crossworld has won, however, is the League's Sportsmanship Award. This is awarded based on the votes of our opponents, and is testament to our success in instilling the right sporting values, culture and ethos in those who represent Crossworld.

Lastly, off the pitch, we were delighted to welcome a number of excellent new volunteers earlier this year. Kay, Kady and Jonny bring with them exciting new ideas that will stand Crossworld in good stead over the next year and beyond. They join an experienced and passionate volunteer team, without whom we could never have achieved all that we have over the past year: Kenzo (Crossworld's original founder), Joey, James, Kunaal, and Freddie. Crossworld is an entirely volunteer-led organisation, and does not employ any staff. As such, all of our volunteers deserve huge thanks for all the effort, enthusiasm and ideas that they have contributed over the past year.

This year's success provides Crossworld with an excellent platform from which to build. We have three priorities for the coming year. First, we must ensure that we are able to continue running the Football Club Project and the Friday Project, and this report provides a number of important suggestions as to how we can ensure we do this as effectively as possible. Suggestions such as increasing the amount of time for training at the Football Club Project, providing additional opportunities to play competitive football for Friday Project participants, and supporting our participants to become football coaches are all part of our plans for next year.

Second, we will invest time in demonstrating our impact and disseminating good practice with other organisations working in similar fields. Football has enormous power to combat social problems and improve lives, and Crossworld is in a unique position to show how the impact it can have.

Third, we will explore opportunities for developing current and new Crossworld activities, so that we (a) can reach even more young people, including young women, who would benefit from our services and (b) ensure the young people with whom we work get the support that they need.

This report provides an excellent starting point for reflecting on our success of the past year, and focusing our efforts both on what we do well and what we could do to be even more effective. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Craig Berry for his sterling work in preparing this excellent and informative report.

Ultimately, what this report shows most clearly is how much being part of Crossworld means to the young people who participate in our activities. Being more than a football club makes a huge difference to the lives of these young people, and we must ensure that Crossworld continues to do so.

**Ben Bryant**

Chair of Trustees

June 2012

## 1. Background on the projects

Crossworld is a registered charity (registered charity number 1141543) that seeks to use football as a means of equipping children and young people who are seeking or who have sought asylum in the United Kingdom, including those defined as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, with the skills, experience and confidence to settle and live productive, healthy and fulfilling lives in the United Kingdom.

Crossworld seeks to achieve these aims by delivering a number of football-based projects for our beneficiaries over a sustained period of time. We have two main projects.

1. **The Football Club Project** – Crossworld has an eleven-a-side men’s football team that competes in a competitive amateur football league and several knock-out cup competitions, and runs weekly training sessions and matches for squad members. The Football Club Project has been running since 2009, and has just completed its third season in a Football Association-affiliated amateur league. Each year, around 30 young people participate in this project.
2. **The Friday Project** – Crossworld also has a weekly drop-in session where young people referred to Crossworld by partner organisations can take part in a structured, yet less formal football session. Each year, around 50 young people participate in this project. The Friday Project was run previously by the Refugee Council, and worked closely with Crossworld’s Football Club Project. In July 2011, Crossworld took over responsibility for running the Friday Project.

## 2. Introduction to the evaluation

Two questionnaires were designed in early 2012 by the author of this report – one for participants of the Football Club Project, and one for participants of the Friday Project. The questionnaires included a range of open-ended and closed-ended (both nominal and ordinal) questions. They were personally administered by Crossworld volunteers in spring 2012 and returned to the report author for analysis. 15 questionnaires were completed by Football Club Project participants, representing a response rate of around 60% among regular participants. 8 were completed by Friday Project participants, representing a response rate of around a third of regular participants.

Following initial analysis of the questionnaires, a set of semi-structured interview questions was compiled by the report author, to facilitate in-depth conversations between Crossworld volunteers and a small number project participants, selected by Crossworld volunteers. This method of collection undermines the validity of interview data, but it was determined that project participants were highly unlikely to participate in face-to-face interviews with an independent researcher, and that a random selection sample by the report author was impossible to administer. As such, this evaluation is based primarily on the survey data; semi-structured interviews are solely to develop case studies in order to illustrate key points from the survey results. In some of the case studies included below, the names of the individuals discussed have been changed.

### 3. Information on survey respondents

Football Club Project participants have an average age of 18.5. The majority (56%) are aged between 16 and 18. The average age of joining the Football Club Project is 17.6. The majority (63%) joined between the ages of 16 and 18. The Friday Project has a younger profile, with an average age of 17.5, and an average joining age of 15.8.

In terms of attendance rates, 56% of Football Club Project participants attend every or almost every weekly training session, and 38% usually attend. The Friday Project has a higher attendance rate, with 75% attending every or almost every session, and the remainder usually attend.

The Friday Project also has slightly higher retention rates. 88% of participants have no plans to stop attending, and the remainder intend to continue attending for at least a year. But Football Club Project retention rates are also very high: 56% will definitely remain involved next season, and 31% will probably remain involved.

For recruitment, the Football Club Project relies on word of mouth. 63% of participants were recruited via a friend (a further 3 ineligible answers (19%) also selected indicated this recruitment method, albeit alongside other methods of recruitment). 13% were recruited via the Friday Project (doubled if the ineligible answers are included). The Friday Project itself relies upon the Refugee Council for recruitment (63%) although word of mouth was also a popular answer (38%).



### 4. Travel

75% of Football Club Project participants find it 'quite easy' to travel to training sessions and matches. 13% find it 'sometimes difficult' and the same proportion find it 'very difficult'. Of those experiencing difficulty, most referred to work commitments as a problem, and some referred to cost. Of those reporting no difficulty, several referred to the support of coaches in arranging travel, including one reference to 'amazing support'. Participants were asked about Crossworld's policy of organising and funding travel to away matches outside of South London. Responses were near-universally positive (only one respondent declined to answer this question), with many expressing gratitude. Around one in five referred explicitly to cost, with one reporting that the policy 'takes the stress out' of travelling to matches.

Understandably, participants who attend every or almost every training session are more slightly more likely to find travelling easier, and those attending only 'usually' slightly less likely. Those who found travelling to training sessions quite easy are almost significantly more likely to remain involved with the Football Club Project next season; those reporting

that they are only 'probably' more likely to remain involved next year are more likely to experience difficulty in travelling to training sessions.

Friday Project participants are less likely to find travelling to sessions 'quite easy' (63%), and more likely to experience difficulty (38%). Opinions on travel difficulties do not, however, appear to be correlated to attendance rates or retention rates.



### **Case study: Yaya**

*Yaya is 19. Yaya is one of Crossworld's Football Club Project's most talented midfielders. Having captained the team earlier in the season, he made a comeback from injury in Crossworld's recent cup final triumph.*

*Yaya joined Crossworld in early 2010, having heard about it from someone with whom he was studying. He joined the Friday Project and a fortnight later was invited to try out for Crossworld's Football Club. At first, he did not know anyone, but now he feels Crossworld's greatest strength are the bonds of friendship between participants. 'We are more than a football team', he says. 'We are brothers. We laugh, joke, and spend time together away from football as well. The others are like family to me and this is really important.'*

*Yaya was confident in his footballing ability before joining Crossworld, but thinks he is now even more experienced and effective as a result of having been part of Crossworld. Frustratingly, Yaya has had to contend with a number of injuries over the past season. To support him, Crossworld has supported him to take up yoga as a way of staying fit and putting his injuries behind him.*

*Yaya intends to stay involved with Crossworld as both a player and a coach. He has big plans for Crossworld: 'One day in the Premier League', he hopes.*

## **5. Enjoyment**

Football Club Project participants tend to enjoy their involvement in Crossworld more than Friday Project participants. 81% of Football Club participants enjoy training sessions and matches 'a lot', and the remainder enjoy them 'mostly'. 50% of Friday Project participants enjoy sessions 'a lot', and 38% enjoy sessions 'mostly'. While for the Friday Project levels of enjoyment do not appear to be correlated to the likelihood of remaining involved next year, for the Football Club Project none of the respondents enjoying their involvement 'mostly' rather than 'a lot' are certain of remaining involved in the project next season.

Football Club Project participants were also asked what they enjoyed most about Crossworld (choosing two answers from five options). Around one in six said 'playing competitive football', the most popular answer. Half said 'improving as a footballer', a third said 'being part of a team', and a quarter said 'learning new skills that help you in your life outside

football'. Only 17% said 'socialising with other Crossworld players', but interestingly, every participant choosing this option chose *only* this option – most other respondents selected two answers (and several selected more than two, and were therefore ineligible).

## **6. Coaching**

The coaching standards of both the Football Club Project and the Friday Project are highly rated by participants; the latter is rated slightly higher, although this may be explained by the differential nature of the two projects. 56% of Football Club Project participants rate the coaching as excellent, and 38% rate it as good. 75% of Friday Project participants rate the coaching as excellent, and 25% rate it as good. However, while for the Friday Project those attending every or almost every session are more likely to rate the coaching as excellent, for the Football Club Project those attending every or almost every session are less likely to rate the coaching as excellent.

When Football Club Project participants were asked 'what makes a good session?' there were a large number of varied answers. Some respondents took the opportunity to complain about certain aspects of training sessions, such as unpunctuality among their team-mates. Some took the opportunity to diagnose the success of training sessions, with coaching standards and team morale identified as factors. The key theme among responses, however, was that more training time in general is needed. In addition, others argued more specifically that they should practice certain skills-based drills more often (although there appears to be no consensus on which ones).

This question received fewer responses in the Friday Project survey, but a clearer pattern can be discerned: respondents are keen for sessions to be more disciplined and organised.

## **7. Football ability**

The vast majority of participants in both projects believe that their involvement in Crossworld has improved their ability as a football – three-quarters in both surveys said they has improved 'a lot', with the remainder saying they has improved 'a bit'.

Football Club Project participants were asked to expand on their answer. There were generic references to football skills, fitness and teamwork. Some of the responses, however, are worth reproducing in full:

*I really enjoy playing for Crossword and I would like to do more hopefully. Every time you play for this club is good, playing with friends, good coaches and the people around is always great.*

*Without any doubt Crossworld has made me definitely a better player and a better person. It helped me to improve my skills either physically as technically, has made me a healthier person, gave me opportunities to demonstrate my abilities and enjoy doing what I like.*

*If I didn't joined Crossworld, I wouldn't play 11 a side matches and get tactical help. When I am with Crossworld team, I enjoy everything that we do on and off the pitch.*

*Training with Crossworld is help me to be confident with the ball and my team and is support me a lot for my life and my health and I can't ask for more than this so thanks a lot for this.*

*Every year I enjoyed more than the last year, Crossworld has given me a lot and has teach me a lot... how to win as a team, how to work as a team and the experience I earn from Crossworld will stay with me for the rest of my life.*

*It has helped me to adapt to playing with players from different backgrounds.*

*I've learned to keep my cool and play as a team no matter what.*



## **8. Standard of team**

Football Club Project participants were asked whether the standard of the team has improved during the time they have been involved with Crossworld. Answers were universally positive, with 81% saying the team had improved 'a lot' and the remainder saying 'a bit'. When asked to expand on their answers, there were several references to the positive impact of new players, and team morale. There were also references to the standard of coaching, and the growing experience of the team.

People with the opinion that the team has improved a lot are slightly more likely than participants in general to report that they will definitely play for Crossworld next season.

### **Case study: Asad**

*Asad is 17. He is the goalkeeper for Crossworld's Football Club Project team, Asad joined Crossworld in October 2009, having been told about Crossworld by a school friend. At the time, he had been living in the UK for around 18 months.*

*Initially anxious about how he would be treated by opponents in a men's football league, Asad says he was made to feel at home by his coaches and team-mates: 'As soon as I played once, the coaches and players were very friendly.'*

*Asad admits that he 'did not really understand football' when he joined, having not played very much in his home country. Having been part of Crossworld's Football Club for three years, Asad says his understanding of the game now is 'totally different'. He estimates that he 80% of what he knows about football he owes to his time with Crossworld. He argues: 'Crossworld has made me a better player, more professional.'*

*For Asad, the key thing he has learnt from his time with Crossworld is the importance of communication. He says: 'everyone needs to communicate in their lives, and at Crossworld I have learned how to get on and work together with people from different backgrounds.'*

*Asad is a trained Level 1 football coach, and plans to use this to coach other young people at Crossworld's Friday Project.*

*Crossworld is very important to Asad: 'Crossworld has helped me to make friends, and to travel to and learn about different parts of London.' Without Crossworld, there would be no other opportunities for Asad to play football at the weekends. 'I don't know what I would do with my weekends without it', he says.*

## **9. Transition to Football Club**

Friday Project participants were asked whether they had played for the Football Club Project team. The overwhelming majority (75%) had not. But when asked to explain, none reported that they did not want to play for the Football Club Project team. Instead, 83% said they had not played for the Football Club project because they had not been selected.

## **10. Wider impact of Crossworld**

It is clear that involvement in Crossworld makes a significant difference to the lives of the individuals involved. Figure 1 contains results for the Football Club Project.

When asked to respond on their answers, there were several references to improved abilities to communicate, with many referring specifically to communicating with people from different backgrounds, one referring to English language skills. There were also several references to the friendships made through Crossworld, with some referring to Crossworld as a family. Again, some of the responses are worth reproducing in full:

*Because we are in connection with other guys from different backgrounds which can help us in communication skills and all parts of the life.*

*The impact of being part of Crossworld helps a lot because it helps you get along with different people from different backgrounds.*

*I don't know what to say, all I know is Crossworld is making a big difference... I'm grateful to be part of it.*

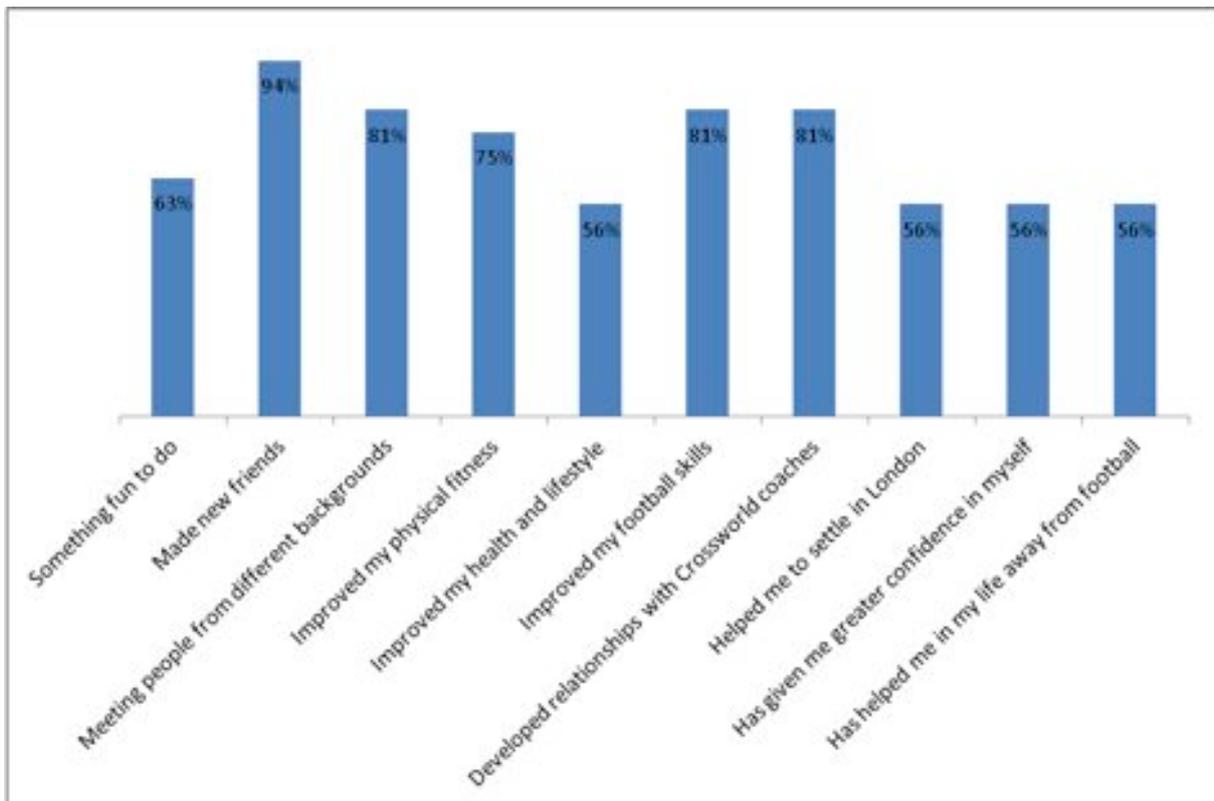
*It has given me more confidence than I thought in my life in the UK.*

*The team spirit is just remarkable, we play like a family.*

*It helped me to improve my English. Gave confidence to express myself and talk and meet new people.*

*It has been like family to me, I met good friends, good coaches and really good people.*

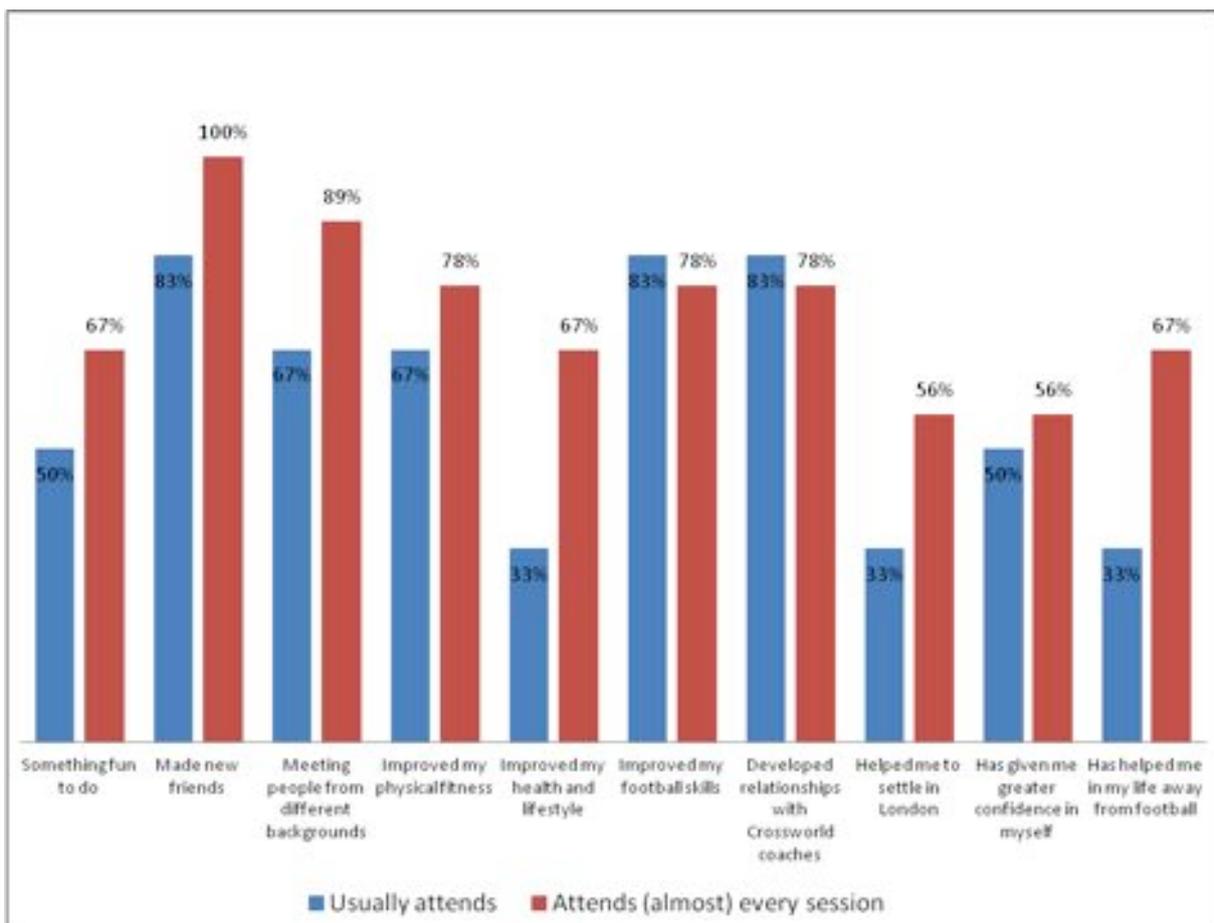
Results in the Friday Project survey were similarly positive. 88% referred to making new friends, 75% referred to having something fun to do, 75% referred to the relationship with Crossworld coaches, 75% referred to meeting people from different backgrounds, and 75% referred to improved football skills. 63% said Crossworld had given them greater self-confidence, and 50% said it had helped them to settle in London.



**Fig 1 Wider impact of involvement in Crossworld. Participants were asked 'Thinking about all of your time involved with Crossworld, what difference to you think this has made to your life?'**

Crucially, for the Football Club Project, the likelihood of certain impacts increases with the frequency of attending sessions. This surely underlines the importance of increasing the number of sessions available, as discussed above. Figure 2 shows that attending every or almost every session makes participants more likely to report, for example, that Crossworld had helped them to meet people from different backgrounds, improved their health and lifestyle (in addition to fitness), and settle in London.

Similarly, people who attend every or almost every session are twice as likely to report that Crossworld ‘has helped me in my life away from football’. Interestingly, while in general only just over half of Football Club Project participants selected this answer, only 13% of participants on the Friday Project, which represents a substantially less intense form of involvement in Crossworld, selected this answer.



**Fig 2 Wider impact of involvement in Crossworld, by frequency of attending. Participants were asked ‘Thinking about all of your time involved with Crossworld, what difference to you think this has made to your life?’**

## 11. Further involvement?

There is an appetite for further involvement in the organisation of Crossworld activities. 63% of Football Club participants said they would like to ‘get more involved in the running of



Crossworld's activities', and the remainder said 'I don't know' – nobody answered 'no'. Of those potentially wanting to get more involved, more than half want to be more involved in coaching, and just under half want to be involved in organising other social activities. 40% want to be more involved in recruitment, 40% want to be more involved in fundraising, and 40% want to be more involved in managing the Crossworld website.

Friday Project participants are slightly less keen to get more involved, but nevertheless half of respondents said they would like to get more involved, with a further 13% answering 'I don't know'. Of those potentially wanting to get more involved, 80% want to be more involved in coaching, and 40% want to be more involved in recruitment.

## 12. Improvements

Both surveys included an open-ended question on what further improvements participants would like to see in Crossworld projects. 75% of Football Club respondents answered this question, and of these, the overwhelming majority (75%) identified a need for additional and/or more extensive training sessions.

### ***Crossworld case study – Hafiz***

*Hafiz is 22. Hafiz was involved with Crossworld when it was first started in 2006, and played for the Football Club Project team during its first season. Hafiz is no longer involved on a week-to-week basis with Crossworld due to study and work commitments, but he often joins Crossworld teams for small tournaments and comes to support the team whenever he can.*

*Hafiz had never really played football seriously before he came to the UK. In his country, 'no-one coached us or taught us key football skills, teamwork, and communication' and he credits Crossworld with having taught him these things.*

*Not only has Crossworld helped Hafiz become a better footballer, but has also had a profound effect on his life away from football. 'Crossworld has helped me more than anything else in my life, from every angle it has helped', he says. Hafiz thinks that skills like teamwork and communication, which he learned at Crossworld, are vital in every walk of life. As a result of his time with Crossworld, Hafiz has been able to demonstrate concrete examples of his skills when interviewing for jobs or when applying for a university course. Now a successful and ambitious student at one of London's top universities, Hafiz says, 'Crossworld changed my life'.*

### **Crossworld case study – Eyob**

*Eyob is 16 years old. In his own words, Eyob has been attending sessions at the Friday Project for a long time. He enjoys playing here because he loves football.*

*Eyob thinks that it is difficult to find places to play football, which is why he thinks the Friday Project is great. Eyob says that he does not know where else he could play football regularly like he does at the Friday Project. If he was not able to play, he thinks it would be very hard given how much he loves to play. He feels that the Friday Project is fun and provides valuable training. Eyob thinks that his skills have improved a lot through the regular play and coaching. The coaches do a good job, he says, and it helps him to get better. The sessions are planned very well and allow him to focus on specific skills.*

Some participants identify a need for new equipment or facilities (25%), and the same proportion identify a need for more social activities away from football. One participant said team-mates needed to show more respect to each other and Crossworld coaches, and one identified a need for football tournaments that last an entire year rather than simply the football season.

Several Friday Project participants also identified a need for more sessions. Two of the most important themes, however, were that participants should play matches against other teams, and that sessions should be more disciplined and organised. It seems that many Friday Project participants would like the project to incorporate some of the aspects of the Football Club Project, such as discipline and competitive matches, although of course none stated this explicitly.

### **13. Conclusions**

One of the strongest sentiments emerging from the surveys, especially the Football Club survey, is gratitude, towards Crossworld in general, and the coaches in particular. By and large participants recognise that involvement in Crossworld is having a significant impact on their lives, as well as providing a fun activity and an opportunity to play sport.

Above all, the social dimension of involvement in Crossworld stands out. Participants clearly make genuine friendships through Crossworld. As many recognise themselves, learning to interact with people from many different backgrounds is beneficial to their lives away from football.

Teamwork is highly valued by Crossworld and project participants. The survey showed that participants have gained valuable experience from working as a team. Many attribute the success of Crossworld to teamwork, as well as recognising its value to their personal development, and in fact express frustration that fellow participants sometimes fail to show respect to their team-



mates, for example through unpunctuality.

In terms of improvements, there is near-unanimity among Football Club Project participants that more training time is required. This is partly to improve the team's chances of success, but more generally because participants recognise the instrumental value of training to their personal development.

Friday Project participants also appear keen for a more extensive engagement with Crossworld. But this relates not only time the number and length of sessions, but also the professionalism of sessions. Specifically, many Friday Club participants are keen for their Crossworld experience to become more disciplined and competitive. Indeed, it seems many would like to participate in Football Club Project. Crossworld is already aware of this sentiment among Friday Project participants, and is taking action to introduce more competitive elements into sessions.

The key point here is that although competitive football may be valuable for its own sake, in addition the Football Club Project shows that increasing opportunities to play competitive football may be crucial to enabling wider personal development in terms of socialisation and the development of soft skills.