

# The Role of Combat Sports in Youth Intervention

Active Essex Foundation Sports and Youth Crime Project



# Workshop aims and outcomes

This interactive workshop explores:

- The role combat sport can play in youth intervention and community safety strategies
- The views of key partner agencies
- Experiences of a young person

Showcasing the BoxSmart on the Ropes provision

In this session you hear from Chief Supt. Waheed Khan, Essex Police Strategic Lead for Partnerships and Engagement, Local Police representation Nick Travers CYP. Followed by a young person's perspective on how combat sports have changed his life and Active Essex Foundation and Essex

Youth Service facilitators who co-deliver the AEF BoxSmart on the Ropes courses across Colchester.

# The Role of Combat Sports in Youth Intervention

Evidence is very clear on the benefits of sports and physical activities on the body and mind and how it can have positive lasting effects now and in the future on our health and well-being .

Combat sports utilises the strengths of discipline, respect, integrity and self-worth to empower young people to make positive life changing choices.

Combat sports can build stronger young people who will be galvanised to reject situations that are likely to cause them or their peer's harm.

Young people learn new skills, discipline, confidence, team-work and effective communication that instils a focused mindset that goes beyond the gym.

# The Role of Combat Sports in Youth Intervention

Pro fighter Joseph Maphosa, Ambassador for the Alliance of Sport and the Levelling the Playing Field project, has experienced boxing's transformative power first-hand and says...

“Boxing gives people something positive to focus on. If they're in the gym, learning a new craft, obeying the rules, showing coaches respect, then they're learning how to live their lives the correct way. Boxing is a really good tool to put people down the right path in life.” ([How boxing can help break the cycle of crime - Alliance of Sport 2024](#))



# AEF BoxSmart on the Ropes courses

AEF Boxsmart on the Ropes is a 12-week for young people referred by agencies, schools and parents who would benefit from a structured boxing/kick boxing life skills programme delivered by qualified coaches and mentors.

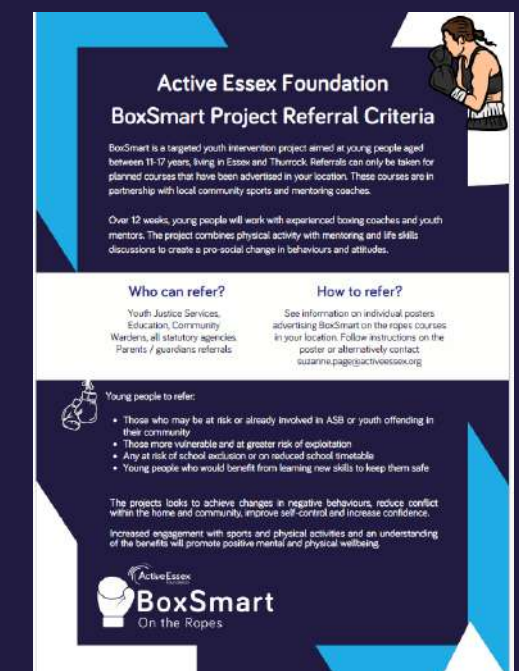
Courses are accredited by AQA and ASDAN awarding bodies and young people have to complete required elements of the course to obtain accreditations and awards.

Every session has topical discussions and one to one and group mentoring. Inspire and equip young people with

The purpose of the course is for young people to:

- Learn new skills in boxing / kick boxing
- Skills in problem solving, teamwork, communication and self-reflection
- Goal setting and completing tasks.
- Positive behaviour changes and attitude to learning
- Building positive relationships with their peers and adults
- Leadership to Inspire others.
- Understanding effects of risk-taking behaviours, Actions Before Consequences (ABC)
- How to stay safe in the community and online.
- Understanding effects of risk-taking behaviours and how to stay safe in the community.
- An understanding of how exercise can benefit physical and mental health and well-being.

Once young people have completed the course, we continue to engage with them on attending other projects, boxing sessions or becoming volunteers to support other young people to ensure long term support is provided.





## 2023 to 2024 data

### Total attendances: 590

- 7 x 12-week courses offered in Colchester (6) and Harlow (1)
- 83 unique young people took part
- Age ranges were between 14- 20yrs.
- 72% male, 18% female from recorded data
- A high number of data recorded young people saying they had a “emotional and/or behavioural need”
- 13 CYP attended more than one course, where they were offered boxing, kickboxing and advanced boxing (key insight: offering follow-on opportunities for those engaged)
- Referring agencies included Youth Justice Service, Social care, Education, self-referrals, Police, community wardens.

#### Insight/learning:

Where we ran 2 x 12-week linked courses offering basic through to advance levels of learning and young people could attend both, we had the greater engagement and changes in behaviour and attitude.

A number of young people have successfully after completing the course become youth volunteers and supporting other courses and community projects.

Having consistent course facilitators offering one to one mentoring and group discussions, resulted in more young people ‘opening up’ more on the challenges/difficulties they faced in the community, at home and school.

Facilitators were able to refer, sign-post or support young people with their concerns and ensure they received timely support.

#### Next steps:

We have been successful in obtaining funding to offer new BoxSmart courses across Great Essex . Including courses in Clacton and Thurrock and further courses in Harlow and Colchester.

AEF are seeking further funding to roll-out the programme across more locations.

We aim to build in more support for young people to gain awards, volunteering aAs part of AE Move with Us) and extended programmes (24-weeks).





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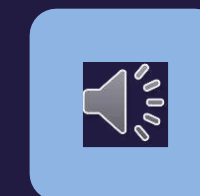
# BoxSmart

On the Ropes





# Videos and voice recording showcasing young people's views and outcomes



Voice recording from BoxSmart on the Ropes course 2024. personal views from a young person attending the sessions.

Boxing sessions with DWP, AEF and young people video.  
Click both images to play.





## Course feedback from boxing coaches and Essex Youth Service



“P is doing a fantastic job both in session and out, taking on a volunteer role helping out with junior boxing and karate classes, whilst taking karate classes for his own continued personal development, uses the gym at SDMA on a regular basis, you can also see the physical changes in him as well as his behaviour, demeanour and the way he interacts with others, it’s amazing to see”

Isaac, Essex Youth Service and SD- Martial Arts coach

“H has started a job, being an ambassador for young people getting out of knife crime and violence, which I think is a great big step for H”

Isaac, Essex Youth Service and SD- Martial Arts Boxing coach

“J has expressed that he really wants to be back into school, he told me BoxSmart had given him some structure to his week, and he missed being around people his own age. He told me he felt really lonely and that he wasn’t a part of anything and BoxSmart had given him something to be a part of.

His mum told me that on days J attended BoxSmart, “He’s like a different person on BoxSmart days, that’s why I keep bringing him, because It’s like having my boy back.”

Jade, Youth Service

“F, on observations and in discussion with him, seems to be getting on better at school, on a development plan for success in school, further education and adult life later on.

Isaac, Essex Youth Service and SD- Martial Arts Boxing coach



## Course feedback from young people and parents

“Helpful and that I liked getting life advice.” AS

“He’s like a different person on BoxSmart days, that’s why I keep bringing him, because It’s like having my boy back.” – Parent

“You didn’t give up on me, everyone gives up on me, even school, but you didn’t.” DS

“I feel less angry now.” CB

The staff are good, they treat you like a person, not a kid. I’m still a little k\*\*\* but I learn stuff. The conversations we have, I learn stuff, I take it in, I don’t always act on it, but it sinks in, I listen to them, and I think about it later.” MD



“I would like to say Thankyou to Tom and Reach Group Community Project for the fantastic support, mentorship and coaching you have given my son G. G would not have had the opportunity to develop his social and boxing skills if this project had not been run, as clubs are so expensive, and I couldn’t have afforded to send him. Tom has supported G so much mentally, has kept G off the streets out of trouble and I now have a child who will return to school after a terrible year 7 with a far more mature head on his shoulders, better physical health and a true passion for boxing.” Parent of G at a boxing course.

“I like coming here, I feel safe here.” CF

“You treat me like a person.” MS

“I look forward to coming here, something to look forward to every week. It keeps me out of the house and it’s good to come here and box, take out your anger, in a controlled manner, you’re not going out on the streets and fighting some random person. You’re here boxing, taking out your anger but controlled so you’re not actual proper fighting - fighting, it’s controlled, and it gets out your anger.





# AEF Interactive session



## Combat Sports Workshop – Activity

How can we engage young people further using combat sports on our Sport & Youth Crime Prevention Programme?

Capture your notes on ? and ask anyone relevant in the room any questions to help you.

## Combat Sports Workshop – Activity

What valuable life skills could combat sports help young people to develop?

Capture your notes on ? and ask anyone relevant in the room any questions to help you

## Combat Sports Workshop – Activity

Why would some people be sceptical in using combat sports as part of a Sport and Youth Crime Prevention Project?

Capture your notes on ? and ask anyone relevant in the room any questions to help you

## Combat Sports Workshop – Activity

How could combat sports help to tackle issues of serious youth violence, knife crime and anti-social behaviour?

Capture your notes on ? and ask anyone relevant in the room any questions to help you

# Research links ion

[How sport can help tackle youth crime and violence | Alliance of Sport](#)

Marcellus Baz, founder of Nottingham School of Boxing and the [Switch Up](#) project  
Switch Up combines the highly effective engagement tool of boxing with mentoring, counselling, personal development, employability training, volunteering and employment opportunities through a range of partners.

[Active Essex Foundation | ESSEX SPORT AND YOUTH CRIME PREVENTION... Active Essex Foundation | BoxSmart 'On the Ropes'](#)

[Study reveals how sports programmes for young children can combat future youth violence | News and events | Loughborough University \(lboro.ac.uk\)](#)

[Sports programmes | Youth Endowment Fund](#)

[The Power of Sports: Combating Youth Violence and Encouraging Positive Change - Activating Creative Talent \(actcic.org.uk\)](#)

[Youngsters to take up football, boxing and rugby in £5 million bid to cut crime - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

