

Insight driving innovation and impact

Girls' Football Programmes in Schools: SEND Research Brief

July 2025

Believing in every child's future

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Introduction

The Youth Sport Trust (“YST”) whose principal offices are in SportPark, Loughborough University, 3 Oakwood Drive, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3QF, invites offers to for a research organisation to evaluate the girls’ football programmes in schools across the academic year 2025-26.

This document sets out the requirements for the research project.

About the Youth Sport Trust

YST is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated and registered as a charity in 2001. It succeeded an unincorporated charitable trust established in 1994 by Sir John Beckwith CBE and Duncan Goodhew MBE.

Our **vision** is a future where every child enjoys the life-changing benefits of play and sport.

Our **mission** is to equip educators and empower young people to build bright futures.

Together, we create opportunities for everyone to belong and achieve.

Our **2022-35 strategy** has three objectives:

- **Urgent action: Build back** healthier, happier and more resilient young people, and level the playing field for those **most disadvantaged**.
- **Generational shift**: To **balance the demands of the digital age** through the **human connection** of physical play and sport.
- **Societal change: Transform society’s perceptions and attitudes** towards the importance of physical literacy, play & sport in the **education & development** of young people.

Starting locally and building momentum, we will galvanise and **inspire changemakers** to transform attitudes, improve practice and drive policy change. Together we will harness the power of play and sport to **build belonging** for a generation, improving their health, fostering inclusion, and developing character and leadership.

To deliver our strategy we have identified six key groups of **changemakers** and how they are best placed to **build belonging**. These groups form the basis for our six strategy tactics are:

- **Equip educators** to rebuild wellbeing and level up life chances of young people most affected by Covid-19, and those suffering from the effect of inequalities.
- **Empower young people** by unleashing a nationwide community of young leaders, who harness the positive power of play and sport to improve wellbeing, build friendships, and foster understanding.
- **Unite a movement** of organisations to reclaim play and sport at the heart of every school and make it fun for everyone.
- **Mobilise influencers** in all areas of public life to make the decline of physical activity levels and human connection in a digital age, matters of national concern.

- **Help families** understand and champion their children's physical literacy and its importance to a healthy and happy childhood.
- **Change from within** by increasing our impact on, connection with, and relevance to, a changing world.

For more information about our organisation, please visit our website:
www.youthsporttrust.org.

About the Project

The YST is seeking to appoint an external research organisation to evaluate the programme delivery they are doing as part of the girls' football in schools contract funded by The FA.

This year The FA and Youth Sport Trust have a disability focused contract with the aim of achieving equal access and equal play for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Delivery of two key programmes will be through the Youth Sport Trust's network of 54 Lead Inclusion Schools. These key programmes are Disney Shooting Stars clubs and festivals and Comets Disability Football clubs.

About the programmes

Disney inspired Shooting Stars SEND clubs and festivals

Each Lead Inclusion School will be responsible for either running in their school or supporting other schools in their area to deliver a minimum of six weeks of Shooting Stars club delivery and facilitating one Shooting Stars Festival during the academic year (c. 2 clubs per county).

Comets Disability Football Club

The Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion School network will be responsible for engaging a total of 100 schools (c.2 per Lead Inclusion School) in the Comet's online e-learning training, supporting these schools to run Comets disability football opportunities for young people with SEND.

There is currently a pilot of Comets Disability Football clubs ongoing with schools in summer 2025. The programme will be reviewed post pilot feedback and therefore we do not expect Comets delivery until completion of the pilot review and programme amends if required.

Appendix 1 includes a logic model for each programme, which outlines more detail about deliverables and intended outcomes.

Delivery milestones

Table 1:

MILESTONE	NOTES	DATE
Orientation session for Lead Inclusion Schools	The FA SEND offer to be shared with all YST Lead Inclusion Schools at their annual networking event.	22 nd September
SEND Shooting Stars Online Training	3 virtual sessions delivered across a 2 hour period.	21 st October 25 th November 12 th February 2:30-4:30pm

Schools commence delivery	Schools need to achieve the outcomes listed above before 31st March 2026	1 st September 2025 – 31 st March 2026
Comets Online Training for teachers	The e-learning can be accessed at anytime on demand.	Training to be completed by 9 th February 2026 to allow for implementation
Schools commence delivery (Comets)	Schools need to deliver the club for a minimum of 4 weeks.	Schools to begin comets delivery by 1 st March 2026
Video Case studies created (The FA will lead on these following contact with the YST and evaluator on recommended schools to film)	Case studies to be recorded by December 2025 to allow for roll out during Inclusion Live week (w/c 26th January 2026).	Case studies to be created by Monday 22 nd January 2026

About the Research

Research aim

To evaluate the success of each programme, including a process and outcome evaluation.

Research questions

The key research questions are outlined in the following table.

Table 2:

RESEARC COMPONENT	KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Process Evaluation	- What delivery aspects worked well and less well? - What factors helped or hindered the programme delivery? - What were the key barriers and motivations to participating in the programmes? - How were young people effectively reached and engaged in the programmes? - What are the key criteria for successful implementation across the programmes? - What factors need to be in place to ensure lasting impacts? - What factors supported successful transition to community provision?
Outcome Evaluation ¹	- Who was successfully engaged in the programmes? Schools and Young People (demographics of young people including age group, previous experience) - What outcomes did the programmes achieve (across different types of young people, as outlined in the logic model)? - To what extent would the outcomes have been achieved without the programmes? - To what extent did the programmes contribute to long term / sustainable outcomes? - To what extent did the programme outcomes vary by regional / socio-economical differences? - To what extent did the programmes contribute to the Equal Access vision for girls to have equal access to football in schools.

The YST aims to put young people at the heart of everything we do and are therefore keen to inform and improve our delivery with insight from young people. Where possible, through the research tasks, the YST would welcome insights into the attitudes, motivations and barriers to participation of young people from different demographic groups.

¹ The outcome evaluation should focus on assessing whether the short term outcomes were achieved, but the YST would welcome consideration for whether participants are on the right path to achieving the longer term outcomes.

Methodology

The YST would like researchers to propose a methodology that best meets our needs. However, we have outlined a number of key methodological considerations:

- A focus on both quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- A mechanism to collect young people's opinions and feedback.
- The YST has a monitoring and evaluation framework in place to assess progress and impact against our latest strategy. The monitoring and evaluation framework would be shared with the successful research organisation, but we would expect our core outputs and outcomes to be captured through the evaluation.
- Case studies covering a range of perspectives and activities. These should be available as stand-alone documents but also integrated into the main report structure.
- We welcome suggestions as to how the experiences of young people can be gathered and showcased in creative ways.
- The YST will make school contact details available to the successful researcher, and any additional data / information that would help the research project.

Research Deliverables

The following deliverables are required from this research project:

1. **Inception note:** Following the inception meeting, a full research methodology, with associated timescales and research tools.
2. **Monthly progress updates:** Regular updates on progress and any challenges/risks in the project.
3. **Interim report (March 2026):** A written report / slide deck to focus on the activity to date plus any broader emerging findings from wider programme delivery.
4. **Final report (August 2026):** The YST would like one final report that integrates all sources of evidence and provides us with an understanding of the outcomes achieved, and recommendations to inform future delivery (maximum of 20 pages). There will be one single report, but we would value individual sections that look in more detail at each of the component parts. The report should be accompanied by a two-page executive summary and where appropriate, we would welcome the integration of visual diagrams and infographics to help present the findings.
5. **Data files:** Any survey data files should be made available, in an appropriate format.

Further guidance on the report content, style and structure will be given to the successful organisation at the inception meeting.

Key Contacts

The research project will be overseen by Lucy Slavin (lucy.slavin@youthsporttrust.org), with additional support from Kelly Fellows (kelly.fellows@youthsporttrust.org).

Research Timescales

The timescales for the research project are detailed in the following table.

Table 3:

MILESTONE	DATE
Inception Meeting	Friday 19 th September
Inception Note	September
Monthly update reports	Monthly
Interim Report	March 2026
Final Report	August 2026

Research Budget

The total budget for the research project is **£10,000** (inclusive of expenses but excluding VAT, if applicable).

The successful Bidder will be paid against the following terms:

- 10% on a signed contract.
- 40% upon satisfactory completion of the interim report.
- 50% upon satisfactory completion of the final report.

Please note, this project is subject to confirmation of funding, which is expected in August 2025.

The Bidding Process

These instructions are designed to ensure that all Bidders are given equal and fair consideration. It is important therefore that you provide all the information asked for in the format and order specified.

Process

The bidding process is as follows:

- Step 1: Bidders are asked to notify the YST by 4pm on Friday 15th August if they intend to submit a written proposal. You can notify us by emailing lucy.slavin@youthsporttrust.org
- Step 2: Full written proposals will be submitted, in line with the requirements outlined below and in Appendix 3.
- Step 3: Following a review of these, shortlisted organisations may be invited for interview.

Timetable

MILESTONE	DATE
Deadline for intention to submit a written proposal	Friday 15th August
Deadline for questions	Friday 15th August
Response to questions shared with all interested bidders	w/c Monday 18th August
Deadline for proposals	Thursday 11th September midday
Interviews	Wednesday 17th September
Successful organisation notified	Thursday 18th September
Inception meeting	Friday 19th September

Proposal Requirements

Bidders are required to submit their proposal in line with the proposal requirements set out in Appendix 3, which includes the following sections:

- Part A: Organisation Details
- Part B: Proposal
- Part C: Contact Details and Declaration

Part B will be assessed as follows:

SECTION	CRITERIA	WEIGHTING
B1	Understanding Requirements	15%
B2	Team and Experience	25%
B3	Methodology and Deliverables	25%
B4	Timetable	5%
B5	Quality Assurance	10%

B6	Pricing	20%
TOTAL		100%

Responses to each section will be allocated a score based on the methodology contained below.

ASSESSMENT	SCORE	INTERPRETATION
Excellent	5	Exceptional demonstration by the Bidder that the Proposal fully meets the requirements and demonstrates added value.
Good	4	Above average demonstration by the Bidder that the Proposal fully meets the requirements to an acceptable standard.
Acceptable	3	Demonstration by the Bidder that the Proposal meets the requirements to an acceptable standard.
Minor reservations	2	The Proposal shows that the requirements are largely met but minor reservations exist about the quality, extent or value for money of the offer provided. The Proposal may lack details on how the requirement will be fulfilled in certain areas.
Major reservations	1	The Proposal shows that the requirements are met but major reservations exist about the quality, extent or value for money of the offer provided. The Proposal lacked detail with regard to how many requirements will be delivered to an acceptable standard.
Unacceptable	0	Failed to demonstrate or provide evidence of an ability to meet the requirements.

Bidders will be ranked in respect of their evaluation score from highest to lowest. The rankings will inform which organisations progress to the next stage of the process.

Further Information

Any questions you have which will help support the development of your proposals should be emailed to lucy.slavin@youthsporttrust.org by Friday 15th August.

The YST will endeavour to answer all questions as quickly as possible but cannot guarantee a minimum response time. Responses to queries will be emailed to all interested organisations, in line with the timetable outlined above. The source of the questions will not be shared.

Proposal Submission

Your final proposal should be emailed to lucy.slavin@youthsporttrust.org and Kelly.fellows@youthsporttrust.org and received no later than midday on Thursday 11th September.

You will receive acknowledgement within a working day that your proposal has been submitted. If you do not receive this or have any questions please contact research@youthsporttrust.org

Appendix 1:

Comets Disability Football Club Logic Model

Context	Aims	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short term outcomes	Long term outcomes
Young people	To ensure that every pupil can experience football through extra-curricular opportunities. Expand access to football for pupils with SEND within schools. Provide high quality training and support for teachers and the wider workforce to embed football into their school's school sport offer. Improve inclusivity in school sport through football-based learning.	Financial investment through The FA and Barclays. YST expertise, resources and expertise e-learning training Hard copy resources and equipment	Young people			
Young people with SEND are less likely to engage in physical activity and extra-curricular sport at school.			Opportunities for young people with SEND to participate in play and sport through football accessing extracurricular opportunities. Develop young people's life skills through participation. Raise aspirations for young people with SEND to participate in an inclusive football environment within the school timetable. Pupils with SEND feeling happier and accessing inspiring and meaningful sporting opportunities.	Number of young people participating (<i>including representation of girls, EDC, SEND and disadvantaged</i>)	Improved physical health (<i>physical activity levels, enjoyment of /confidence to take part in PA</i>) Improved mental health (<i>happiness</i>) Improved social wellbeing (<i>connectedness / belonging</i>) Improved character (<i>resilience</i>) Increased leadership skills Increased enjoyment of playing football	Achieve equal access and equal play for young people with SEND, increasing their sense of belonging in school and to their communities through football participation. Empower more young people with SEND to inspire their peers to be active through leadership opportunities.
Educators			Educators			
Increase knowledge of how to deliver inclusive practice to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to participate in school sport and physical activity.			Provision of tools, resources and content Receive e-learning training	100 teachers trained in comets online learning	Increased confidence and competence to engage young people with SEND in football activities More inspired / motivated to engage young people with SEND in football activities	Equip educators to level up the life chances of young people and tackle inequalities that exist to being active
Schools			Schools			
Increase positive perceptions of disability football			Targeting schools in lower areas of affluence with young people with the greatest need Stronger alignment between community and school-based football opportunities for pupils with SEND.	100 schools delivering Comets an extracurricular opportunity focusing on positive transition experiences	Improved perceptions of sport and physical activity. Improved partnership working (<i>quality and quantity, within and across sectors</i>) Achieve equal access and equal play for young people with SEND Increased sense of belonging to school and communities through football participation	Sport and PA is reclaimed within education (fun and at the heart of what they do) and the playing field is levelled for those most disadvantaged. Improved perceptions of disability football.

Shooting Stars Disability Clubs and Festivals

Context	Aims	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short term outcomes	Long term outcomes
						
Young people	To ensure that every pupil can experience football through extra-curricular opportunities. Expand access to football for pupils with SEND within schools. Provide high quality training and support for teachers and the wider workforce to embed football into their school's school sport offer.	Financial investment through The FA and Barclays. YST expertise, resources and expertise Hard copy resources Online virtual training	Young people	Number of young people participating (<i>including representation of girls, EDC, SEND and disadvantaged</i>)	Improved physical health (<i>physical activity levels, enjoyment of /confidence to take part in PA</i>) Improved mental health (<i>happiness</i>) Improved social wellbeing (<i>connectedness / belonging</i>) Improved character (<i>resilience</i>) Improved life skills (e.g. teamwork, leadership, communication) Increased enjoyment of playing football	Achieve equal access and equal play for young people with SEND, increasing their sense of belonging in school and to their communities through football participation. Empower more young people with SEND to inspire their peers to be active through leadership opportunities.
Young people with SEND are less likely to engage in physical activity and extra-curricular sport at school.			Opportunities for young people with SEND to participate in play and sport through football accessing extracurricular opportunities. Develop young people's life skills through participation. Raise aspirations for young people with SEND to participate in an inclusive football environment within the school timetable. Pupils with SEND feeling happier and accessing inspiring and meaningful sporting opportunities.			
Educators			Educators			
Increase knowledge of how to deliver inclusive activities to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to participate in school sport and physical activity.			Provision of tools, resources and content Receive virtual training.	3 cohorts totalling 50 schools trained. 50 schools delivering Disney Inspired Shooting Stars festivals	Increased confidence and competence to engage young people with SEND in football activities More inspired / motivated to engage young people with SEND in football activities	Equip educators to level up the life chances of young people and tackle inequalities that exist to being active
Schools			Schools			
Increase positive perceptions of disability football			Targeting schools in lower areas of affluence with young people with the greatest need	Number of schools engaged Each Lead Inclusion School to run one SS Festival (x52)	Improved perceptions of sport and physical activity. Improved partnership working (<i>quality and quantity, within and across sectors</i>)	Sport and PA is reclaimed within education (fun and at the heart of what they do) and the playing field is levelled for those most disadvantaged. Improved perceptions of disability football

Appendix 2: Conditions of Participation

Bidding Instructions

Bidders should read the bidding instructions carefully before completing their proposal. Failure to comply with these requirements for completion and submission of the proposal may result in the rejection of the proposal.

Participation in the bidding process automatically signals that the Bidder accepts these conditions of participation.

This Research Brief is not an offer or guarantee of award of business and it does not form a contract between YST and the Bidder.

Intellectual Property Rights

All material issued in connection with this Research Brief shall remain the property of YST and shall be used only for the purpose of this procurement exercise.

Costs

Bidders must obtain for themselves at their own responsibility and expense all information necessary for the preparation of Proposals.

Bidders are solely responsible for the costs and expenses incurred in connection with the preparation and submission of their Proposal and all other stages of the selection process.

Under no circumstances will YST be liable for any costs or expenses borne by Bidders, sub-contractors, suppliers, or advisers in this process.

Confidentiality

Bidders shall treat the contents of the Research Brief and any related information as confidential information and shall only use this confidential information for the purposes of submitting (or deciding whether to submit) a Proposal.

Bidders may only disclose, distribute, or pass on any of the confidential information to their advisers or sub-contractors provided that this is done for the sole purpose of enabling a Proposal to be submitted and that the receiver of the information undertakes in writing to keep the information confidential on the same terms as if they were the Bidder.

YST may disclose, distribute, or pass on any of the information contained in the Bidder's proposal to external partners, where they are contractually involved in the project that is the subject of the research.

Modification by YST

At any time prior to the deadline for the receipt of Proposal, YST may modify the Research Brief and/or terms and conditions of the process. Any such amendment will be issued by YST to all prospective Bidders. To give prospective Bidders reasonable time in which to take the amendment into account in preparing their Proposals, YST may, at its discretion, extend the Deadline for receipt of Proposals.

Proposal Deadline

YST may at its own absolute discretion extend the closing date and the time for receipt of Proposals. Any extension granted will apply to all Bidders.

Any Proposal received at the designated point after the deadline outlined in the Research Brief may be rejected.

Confirmation of Proposal Submission

Unless otherwise stated, YST will send an email to the key contact to confirm receipt of the Proposal within 2 working days of receiving the Proposal.

Proposal Validity

Your Proposal should remain open for acceptance for a period of 90 days.

Modification by Bidder

Bidders may modify their Proposal prior to the deadline by giving notice to YST.

No Proposal may be modified subsequent to the deadline for receipt.

Withdrawal by Bidder

Bidders may withdraw their Proposal at any time prior to the deadline or any other time prior to accepting the offer of a Contract. The notice to withdraw the Proposal must be in writing and sent to YST.

Right to Cancel

YST reserves the right to cancel the tender process at any stage prior to the award of the contract, without incurring any liability to the affected Bidders.

Right to Clarify

YST reserves the right to require the Bidder to clarify its Proposal in writing and/or provide additional information.

Right to Reject/Disqualify

YST reserves the right to reject or disqualify a Proposal where:

- The Bidder fails to comply fully with the requirements of this Research Brief or is guilty of a serious misrepresentation in supplying any information required in this document.
- The Bidder is guilty of serious misrepresentation in relation to its Proposal.
- There is a change in identity, control, financial standing, or other factor impacting on the selection and/or evaluation process affecting the Bidder.

Right to Accept

YST reserves the right to accept all or part of an offer unless the Bidder expressly stipulates to the contrary.

Data Protection

YST will comply with all applicable Data Protection Legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. For further information on the lawful basis for processing any personal information and how we are committed to respecting your privacy, please see our full privacy notice on our website found here: <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/privacy-policy>

Unless the Bidder requests for their contact details to be deleted, YST will retain the Bidder's key contact details. YST may use these contact details to notify organisations of future research opportunities that may be of interest.

Appendix 3: Proposal Requirements

To be completed by all bidders. Maximum of 15 pages. Each sub-section is to be completed in order, but the format and presentation of this information can be decided by the Bidder. CV's, along with any other relevant information can be provided in appendices.

Part A: Organisation Details

Full name of organisation (or of organisation acting as lead contact if a consortium bid is being submitted):	
Registered office address:	
Company or charity registration number:	
VAT registration number:	

Part B: Proposal

Part B1: Understanding Requirements (weighting = 15%)

We are looking to appoint an organisation that has a clear understanding of our requirements for this research project.

Please provide an overview of:

- Your understanding of the key aims and objectives of the project
- Your understanding of the key aims and objectives of the research project

Part B2: Team and Experience (weighting = 25%)

We are looking to appoint an organisation that can demonstrate a strong track record of delivering evaluation research that focuses on: young people, schools and physical activity.

Please provide an overview of your organisation's experience, including:

- Examples of similar research projects your organisation has delivered.
- Experience of effectively engaging similar beneficiaries and stakeholders in research.
- Details of the team who will be working on the research project, including their role, previous experience and DBS status (if applicable).

Part B3: Methodology and Deliverables (weighting = 25%)

We are looking to appoint an organisation that offers a robust and appropriate methodology for this project.

Please detail your proposed methodology, including:

- How you will effectively engage all relevant stakeholders in the research.
- How you will ensure high levels of confidence in the research, including an indication of sample sizes.
- An overview of your outputs / deliverables that are appropriate for key audiences.

Part B4: Timetable (weighting = 5%)

We are looking to appoint an organisation that can deliver the research within the specified timetable.

Please provide a timetable for delivering the research, including:

- Key milestones for research activities.
- Key milestone for outputs / deliverables.

Part B5: Quality assurance (weighting = 10%)

Please provide details on your quality assurance processes, including:

- Arrangements for managing the research.
- Arrangements for securing the necessary research ethics and consent.
- Processes for quality assuring the research activities and deliverables.

Part B6: Pricing (weighting = 20%)

It is essential that the YST enters into an arrangement where the process for achieving competitive pricing and best value is clearly defined and transparent.

Please provide a breakdown of costs for undertaking the research, including:

- A breakdown of time and costs per activity and per team member
- Inclusion of expenses (if applicable)

Note: Costs should include all travel and expenses, and VAT, if applicable.

Part C: Contact Details and Declaration

Part C1: Agreement to terms and conditions

This contract will be delivered under our standard terms and conditions for research services, a link to which is included below.

<https://www.youthsporttrust.org/research-terms-and-conditions>

Any amendment requests will only be considered during the assessment process and therefore must be included below, as part of your Proposal submission.

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Part C2: Contact details

Please provide contact details for enquiries about this proposal.

Name:	
Organisation:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

Part C3: Declaration

I confirm that I am authorised to sign on the behalf of the organisation and that all the information given in this proposal submission is true and accurate.

Name:	
Position:	
Organisation name:	
Signed:	
Date:	

Appendix: Additional supporting information

Please provide any additional information that may support your submission.



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