

News story: Sports groups score £400,000 funding boost to tackle extremism

Building a Stronger Britain Together, the government campaign to support organisations helping to protect their communities from extremism, has today (Friday 22 June) awarded a funding boost to sports community groups.

The organisations, including England Netball, Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation and Southend United Community and Education Trust, will receive a share of £400,000 funding to create year-long sports-based schemes and support people who may be vulnerable to extremism. These range from boxing classes and football workshops to community engagement projects and table tennis sessions.

Baroness Williams, the Minister for Countering Extremism, made the announcement as the BSBT network met at St Andrew's – the home of Birmingham City Football Club – to discuss how their work has helped counter extremists' narratives.

Baroness Williams, Minister for Countering-Extremism, said:

Whether it is cricket, football, netball or boxing, sport is a uniquely powerful way to break down barriers and provide a common platform to unite us all.

The Building a Stronger Britain Together programme is all about strengthening communities so that they can stand against those who seek to divide us with extremist views. We want to create more opportunities to bring people from a wide range of backgrounds together.

Since 2015, the BSBT programme has supported more than 130 organisations, including the EFL Trust and Show Racism the Red Card, for innovative projects to stand up against extremism. It was set up as part of the government's Counter-Extremism Strategy.

The BSBT network includes grassroots campaigns that bring together young people from segregated communities, build resilience to extremism and challenge extremist narratives.

One group to have received funding from BSBT in the past is Lord Taverners, who run Wicketz, a community cricket programme targeting young people aged 8 to 16 living in areas of deprivation.

Abdus Salaam, 18, joined the club in Summer 2016, having struggled with anger management issues after witnessing domestic abuse. He admits that he was

going down a path of violence before joining the club. Now he has become assistant coach for the Luton-based project and backed the further BSBT funding.

Abdus said:

Sport absolutely saved me. Sport kept me off the street and if I was not introduced to Wicketz I don't like to think what road I would be on.

This kind of funding is amazing. It is so important that these vulnerable kids have role models and have a chance to become a good role models themselves. This is what it is all about – spreading these positive messages by word of mouth one person at a time and letting people know there is a different route.

I work with people from all backgrounds and I have learnt that there are good people everywhere.

The full list of groups that received funding are: Brighton Table Tennis Club (Brighton); Centre West, Foundation of Light, Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation (North East); England Netball, Dagenham & Redbridge FC Community Trust; Club Cricket Conference (London); Small Heath Boxing Club (Birmingham); Colchester United Football in the Community (Essex); Southend United Community and Education Trust (Essex).

Further groups receiving funding will be announced in due course.