

Physical Activity & Sports contribution to Mental Wellbeing

Flux Mentoring – Mark Skidmore

Evidence

Many of the young children I work with either suffer from anxiety and a lack of self-esteem or find themselves in situations leading to anti-social behaviour.

Recently I have received phone calls and emails from parents practically begging me to work with their child. Having to explain I am unable to offer any face-to-face support due to COVID restrictions is heart breaking for the parents and myself who feel completely helpless at this time.

One child I have worked with pre covid has now become suicidal. He is reluctant to go to school but does with his father's support. When he comes home, he gets in bed and stays there until the morning. He has become violent at times destroying his room. This is completely out of character from the quiet, shy boy I have been working with for 2 years prior to covid.

Another young lad at 15 years old tends to engage in anti-social behaviour. Jumping out of his window at 2am and smoking weed. His parents brought him to me, and we managed to channel his energy into martial arts. His behaviour improved along with his schoolwork and relationship with his family. Since lockdown this has dramatically changed, and the previous patterns have returned. We have had phone calls over the last couple of weeks and even short conversations about the potential return of sport has been enough to see small positive changes to his mindset.

Now we can exercise with 1 person outside I am confident that it will not take long before these 2 children are back on track. However, I could give a hundred examples of children I have worked with who have benefitted from physical activity.

I am in the process of making Flux mentoring a CIC with the support of my committee so we can seek larger amounts of funding which will enable us to train more staff and offer more support to the community.

I am working within schools to provide alternative provision, but this ultimately relies on school funding. Our aim is to secure our own funding to provide support in and out of school.

Sport plays so many roles within the mind and body of a child. Apart from the obvious health benefits we also see improved confidence and the ability to work within a team.

Planning sessions with small achievable goals helps children to grow in confidence and gives them a sense of achievement. Something a lot of children do not get from school or experiences at home.

Sport gives children the opportunity to create friendship networks. Something that is increasing difficult to develop in school now children use social media and texts to communicate.

It develops self-worth, positive body image, promotes positive mindsets. It gives children a safe place to make mistakes, to fall and get up again. To overcome adversity.

The evidence is in school detention rooms. It's in prisons, it's in hospitals, it's on the news. It is in the statistics.