



STREET SOCCER ACADEMY:

RECRUITMENT & REFERRALS – Tips & Advice

Recruiting vulnerable and homeless young people onto a Street Soccer Academy programme, requires a targeted, compassionate, and trust-building approach. Below is a list of effective strategies to consider. By combining these approaches, you can build trust, reach the right demographic, and inspire young people to take the first step towards joining your Street Soccer Academy programme.

1. Partner with Local Organisations and Services

- **Homeless Shelters:** Establish relationships with shelters, hostels, and temporary housing services where homeless individuals often seek support. These organisations can refer young people to join your programme.
- **Youth Support Agencies:** Partner with local agencies and charities that already work with vulnerable young people, including those offering mental health services, addiction recovery, and employment assistance. Examples include YMCA, Young Minds, UK Youth
- **Local Authorities and Councils:** Engage local governments that oversee welfare, housing, and youth services to help promote the Academy to the right demographic.
- **Job Centres:** Many vulnerable young people may be seeking job training / work opportunities. Job Centres can be ideal referral points.

2. Community Outreach and Pop-Up Events

- **On-the-Ground Community Outreach:** Deploy colleagues to visit local relevant organisations to connect with support workers as well as young people directly. This can include distributing flyers, sharing programme details, and offering immediate conversations to build trust and insight into the benefits of joining the programme.
- **Host Pop-Up Football Sessions:** Run casual and non-committal events in areas where homeless and vulnerable youth are likely to be. Use these events to promote the Academy programme as a next step for those interested in developing their skills.

3. Colleagues, Young Ambassadors and Success Stories

- **Engage Street Soccer Academy Alumni:** Use former participants as Ambassadors of the Academy programme to share their success stories. Hearing directly from young people who have benefited from the programme is a powerful recruitment tool.
- **Word of Mouth:** Encourage current or former participants to spread the word about the programme, especially if they have experienced similar vulnerabilities and can relate to potential recruits.
- **Other Internal Provision:** Speak with colleagues across your organisation where other groups of young people in the same age bracket may be on other programmes of support – where in instances, young people might be able to also join the Academy programme, whilst being on alternative courses – to add a further layer of wraparound support for those in your care.

4. Social Media and Online Campaigns

- **Targeted Ads:** Use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to run geo-targeted ads that focus on areas where vulnerable youth may be. Tailor messages to appeal to young people, emphasising the personal growth, support, and community aspect of the programme.
- **Influencer and Partner Content:** Collaborate with former players of the club, community leaders, and/or other charities with strong social media followings, to amplify the programme's benefits and visibility.

- **Engage in Online Forums:** Post about the programme in forums or groups where people experiencing homelessness or vulnerability are active, such as local Facebook groups.

5. Offer Incentives and Clear Benefits

- **Support Services:** Emphasise that the Street Soccer Academy programme offers a lot more than just football training. Highlight the wraparound services such as personal development, life skills, mentoring, and support with housing, employment, and mental health.
- **Incentives:** The Academy programme also looks for Delivery Partners to provision food and refreshments at every session, which will be added incentives for young people to attend and commit to the programme. This plus the new kit provision for all course participants as well as the National Football Tournament playing opportunity!

6. Build Trust and Personal Connections

- **Non-Judgmental Approach:** Ensure your appointed staff are compassionate, non-judgmental, and approachable. Many young people who are vulnerable or homeless may be distrustful of organisations, so it's crucial to build rapport gradually.
- **One-on-One Conversations:** Face-to-face, individualised conversations can be more effective than large recruitment drives driven by emails or online posts. In driving in-person discussions wherever possible, also allow potential participants to ask questions and express concerns in a private, safe space.

7. Collaborate with Local Sports Clubs and Colleges

- **Sports Clubs:** Work with local football clubs or community sports teams who may already have connections with at-risk young people. They can help promote the programme and direct participants towards the Street Soccer Academy.
- **Colleges:** Some at-risk or vulnerable young people may still be in educational settings, or have recently left. Partner with institutions that have outreach programmes for youth experiencing difficulties.

8. Referral Events / Taster Sessions

- **Collaborative Recruitment Events:** Host joint events with referral partners where you can promote the programme directly to potential participants and explain the benefits in person.
- **Tasters:** A week or two prior to going live with delivery of the Academy programme, host 1-2 initial, informal 'Taster Sessions' for young people to attend along with their support workers. Typically, the Taster Session will offer a football training session, along with some light lunch and refreshments. It offers an opportunity for young people to meet with your team, and those who would be running the Academy programme, as well as become familiar with the venue and potential other young recruits. Taster Sessions give the added opportunity of championing the programme – ensuring young people know there's a lot more on offer other than just football coaching! The course offers personal development, life skills, mentoring, employment opportunities, health and wellbeing support – as well as an exciting National Tournament to play in!

9. Tailored Communication and Language

- **Use Youth-Centric Language:** Ensure your recruitment materials use language that resonates with young people. Highlight how the programme is about empowerment, community, and personal growth, rather than just addressing homelessness or vulnerability.
- **Avoid Overly Formal Materials:** Use informal, visual content like videos, infographics, or testimonials from other young people to ensure a more accessible and relatable feeling for the benefit of young people.