



School of Hard Knocks is a registered charity that seeks to enable participants to formulate a positive vision for their own lives, take personal responsibility to make the changes they need to make and equip them emotionally in order to sustain those changes.

We want to see the pupils we work with re-engaged with education and our unemployed adult participants thriving in the work place. We do this through a blend of sporting activity and a class room based curriculum that has been developed around well researched and established psychological concepts.

Creating futures – Changing lives

A Brief History

The first School of Hard Knocks course was commissioned by Knowsley Council in Merseyside, back in 2007 to address unemployment in the area. Subsequent courses were delivered for a wide range of organisations such as NHS trusts and Youth Offending Teams, several of which were documented by Sky Sports. By 2012, the need for the work to expand and serve more people was apparent and so the School of Hard Knocks charity was registered.

Working now in London, Cardiff, Glasgow and Edinburgh, the charity currently now employs core team of 18 members of staff, as well as several sub-contracted sessional coaches with whom we work regularly. The board of trustees is chaired by Deborah Griffin, OBE and our Patrons are Andy Grant and Andy Gomarsall, MBE.

What we stand for

Our Vision

A society in which everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.

Our Mission

To empower people to fully realise their potential.

Our Philosophy

- We strive to be innovative and ground breaking in whatever we do
- We will deliver programmes that meet real needs, empower individuals and inspire positive change
- We are driven by meaningful values, centered on the SOHK family

Our Values

- Excellence
- Integrity
- Empowerment
- Commitment

SOHK for Schools

What is it?

A three-year programme that helps children who are disengaged from school realise their potential and change the way they think and behave. This is a three-year journey in which pupils aged between 13 and 16 are introduced to the game of rugby and its values.

Who is it for?

Many of the children we work with are struggling for motivation and a sense of engagement with school. Others are in need of increased personal confidence and a sense of wellbeing. Others still need to improve their behavior and attendance. Many are a combination of all three.

How does it work?

Pupils are identified by the Heads of Year as the most at risk of exclusion. They then participate in a rugby and life development programme that is healthy, fun, challenging and enriching. This can last between one and three years. Clear individual targets are set out in consultation with their schools in terms of attendance, academic achievement and behaviour. Our coaches, with support from our team of three behavioural specialists, mentor and develop these young people through rugby, every school week, for up to three years.

What will it result in?

Pupils will:

- Realise their own potential and prepare for life beyond school
- Improve their physical health and wellbeing
- Improve school attendance and behaviour
- Improve educational attainment
- Grow to understand and exemplify the SOHK values



SOHK Adult Programmes

What is it?

An eight week course for unemployed adults in which a challenging sports programme supports class-based training, with the ultimate aim of enabling participants to find employment and realise their potential.

How does it work?

Through three distinct phases – The Person, The Mind and The Career – we teach a framework of positive values and attitudes to equip participants for the workplace and for life more generally. Our unique SOHK psychology helps people overcome the barriers that stand in their way.

Ongoing support

Volunteer mentors work for up to a year after the course to help participants to stay focused on their life and career goals, make positive choices and continue the improvements they began when working with us initially. Our aim is to keep former participants fixed on their new trajectory!



“
I am delighted to be involved with the SOHK which provides such positive and supportive interventions for a wide range of client groups.

Their approach really resonates with current thinking about how to engage participants in positive activities and facilitate real change. Our data shows that the intervention is highly valued by those going through the programmes.”

Professor Liz Gilchrist
Glasgow Caledonian
University

Where we work

Our desire is to see the work of the charity grow so that we can offer our service to as many people as possible in the areas of greatest need. We currently have delivery teams working in and around Cardiff, London, Edinburgh and Glasgow and aim to launch a North West office by 2020.

Current SOHK Delivery & Impact

Our adult delivery sees 45% of participants, many of whom are amongst the hardest to reach, find employment and 60% of those sustain that employment for the long term. Over 95% of participants also said that they saw improvements in self-confidence, motivation, hopefulness *and* ability to face challenges.

By the end of 2017 we were working on a weekly basis with over 300 pupils in London and Cardiff and have recently seen our first female schools group finally get started. To date we have seen 99% of the children we have worked with stay in school, with teachers unanimously reporting improved behaviour, attendance and punctuality across the groups.

Current Funding and Needs

To deliver our services, we depend on a combination of trust and grant income, corporate sponsorship, individual giving as well as income through local and central government contracts. Over 80% of SOHK revenue is directly spent on frontline delivery, with the remainder supporting our central running costs and fundraising work. We are always happy to discuss any fundraising needs directly.

Growing the SOHK Family

We are incredibly fortunate to have a great body of volunteers who support our work and enable it to grow, working either as trustees, volunteers or formal Ambassadors. Various institutions have contributed to our growth, be it in the form of grants and sponsorship, 'in kind' support or charity partnerships. The challenge is to continue to grow our 'SOHK family' in order to realise the charity's ambition, which is to help the beneficiaries realise their own!

If you would like more information about our funding needs and partnerships, please contact us: info@schoolofhardknocks.org.uk

“School of Hard Knocks uses rugby as a catalyst - the main goal is to get these people into employment by giving them the key skills they need through the sport....

.....It’s about picking someone up when they are down; giving them a hand if they’re struggling and hopefully putting a smile on their faces.”

**Scott Quinnell
Wales, British & Irish Lions
SOHK Ambassador**

