

COVALUATION REPORT

Tulse Hill Junior Football Club



September 2025 [DRAFT]

SUMMARY

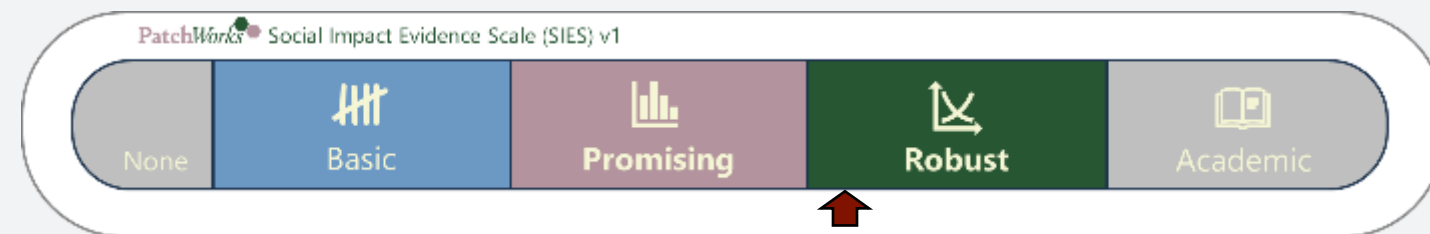
The project

PatchWorks partnered with Tulse Hill Junior Football Club (THJFC) to review the difference the club makes for children, and how the club can grow.

This co-produced evaluation ('Covaluation') report aims to prove the crucial role a well-run sports club plays in the community.

What the Covaluation tells us

- Playing for the football club is clearly having a positive physical, social & emotional impact on children – now and longer term.
- Parents (& guardians) are overwhelmingly positive about how effective the club is run and the difference it is making to their children.
- We have ranked the evidence as "Robust" on the PatchWorks Social Impact Evidence Scale (SIES – more information [here](#)).



Why it matters

- This report will help the club shape its future strategy for how it can grow and improve – and offer more local children the opportunity of playing.
- It will also support the club with its partnerships and demonstrate value for money to its primary sponsor which is crucial to sustaining the club.

Impact on children

Of the 134 parents who completed our survey....



94% said the club improved their child's **physical health**.



93% said the club has helped their child to **make new friends & meet new people in the wider community**.



88% said the club improved their child's **confidence & self esteem**.



77% said the club improved their child's **communication / social skills**.

"My child's improved confidence from being in a friendly, supportive team has rippled to all other parts of her life – she is more willing to try new things, has stronger friendships and is stronger and fitter than she has ever been! – thank you THJFC."

ABOUT THE CLUB

History

Tulse Hill Juniors FC (THJFC) was founded in 1965, and this year marks its 60th anniversary making it London's oldest kids football club. It has seen over 20 players go on to have professional careers.

Constitution

- ◆ As common with sports clubs it is an unincorporated association, essentially a member's club.
- ◆ The club is completely volunteer run, with an elected committee of club officers along with over 50 coaches who are typically parents. Coaches are DBS-checked, undertake FA training, and offered support on how to run their team and improve their coaching skills.
- ◆ THJFC has 19 teams across age groups spanning Under 6 to Under 16, including 7 girls' teams.

Approach & ambition

- ◆ THJFC positions itself as a community club, prioritising the inclusion, happiness and development of children versus winning at all costs.
- ◆ It has grown the number of teams in recent years and would like to expand further and offer more places, in response to a growing waiting list of local children eager to join. With a recent focus on growing girls' football through schemes like FA Wildcats.
- ◆ The main barrier to expansion is access to pitches. Like many London clubs it does not have its own ground and relies on a series of expensive pitch leases and hires to provide Saturday training and Sunday matches. Access to all-weather pitches is particularly limited.
- ◆ The club is partnered with Palace for Life, Crystal Palace FC's football foundation, who provide development support and training for the club's volunteer coaches.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

Members (parents and volunteers)

- ◆ We approached all members in the club which was a list of 323 parents (or guardians) of approx. 270 children. This group included most of the club officer and coach volunteers, who are also parents.

What we collected

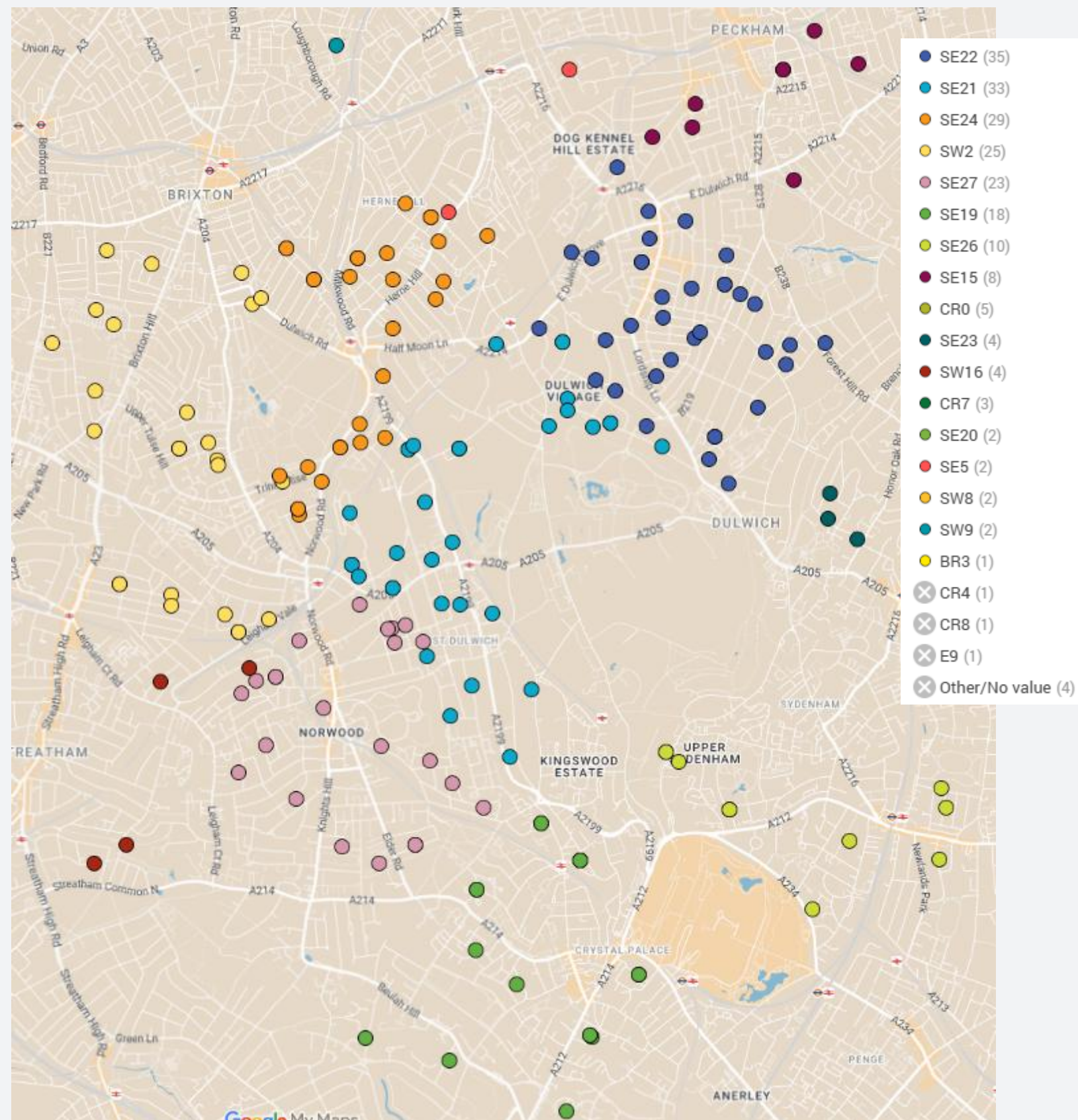
- ◆ Anonymous survey to parents: we received 134 submissions, a response rate of 41%.
- ◆ Postcode data from the club's admin system on 214 members.

Covaluation approach

- ◆ We codesigned the project primarily focussing on the outcomes that playing for the club has on children. These outcomes and the survey questions were produced in collaboration with the club committee.
- ◆ We also took the opportunity to ask the parents questions around how the club is being run, how it could improve, and whether they would recommend the club to others.



WHERE PLAYERS LIVE

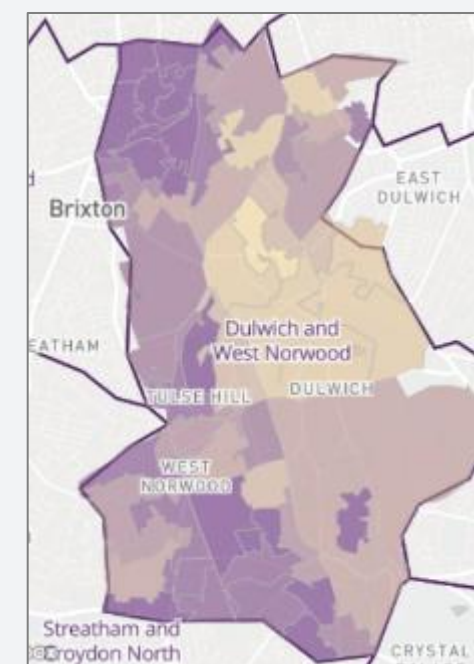


What is the reach of the club?

- ◆ The club is interested in reaching and representing the diverse range of people that live in and close to Tulse Hill, so we assessed player postcode data (n=214).
- ◆ The map to the left shows that the club attracts players from a wide area, with concentrations in Tulse Hill, Norwood, Herne Hill and Dulwich.

Who does the club serve?

- ◆ To understand the socio-economic reach of the club, we ran these postcodes through the UK government's indices of deprivation postcode lookup tool ^[1].
- ◆ The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the UK government's official measure of relative deprivation, ranking small areas based on various domains to identify the most disadvantaged communities.
- ◆ The IMD value of each postcode ranged from 2 to 10, showing that players come from a wide mix of neighbourhoods.
- ◆ The club's **average IMD decile is 5.1** (out of 10) is close to the national average (5), and **higher than the average for the local area of 4.4** - based on government data for the Dulwich and West Norwood constituency ^[2], which covers the area around Tulse Hill where most players live.



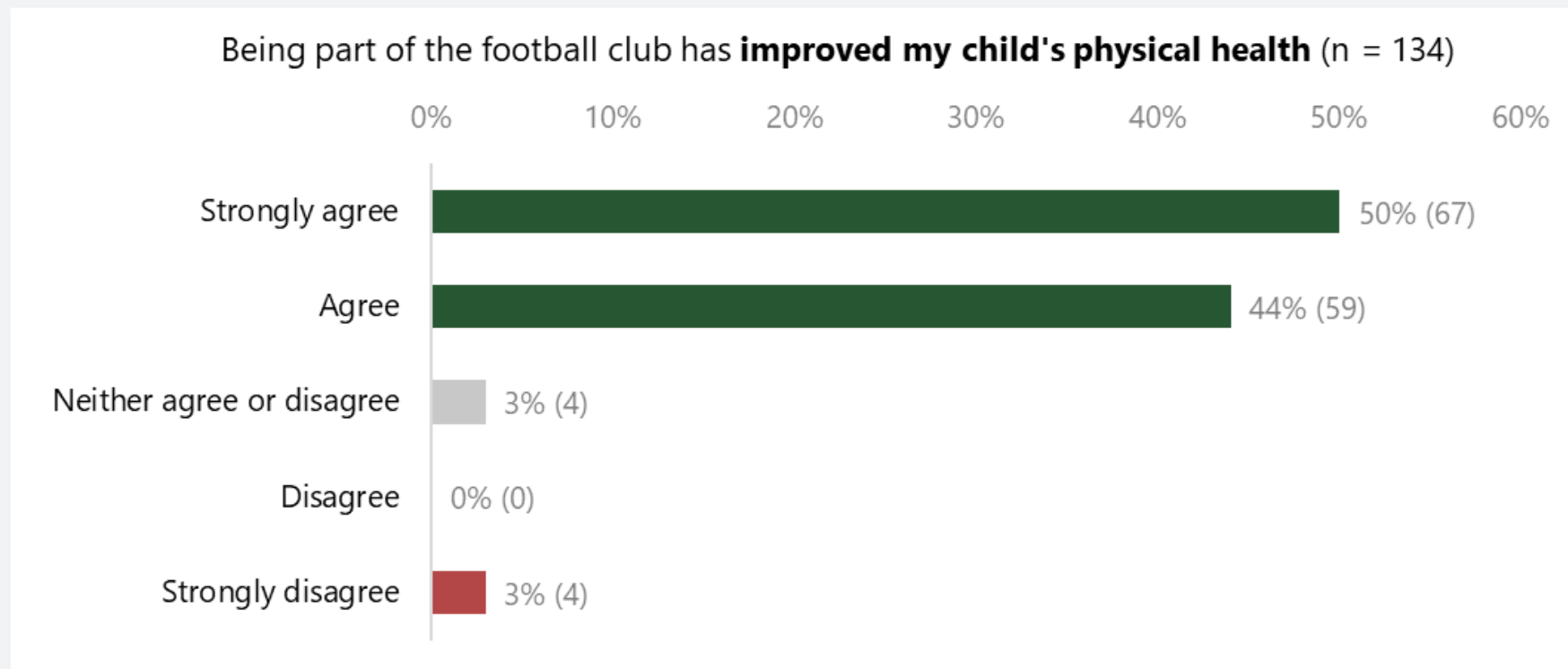
[1] English indices of deprivation lookup [website](#). [2] Constituency data: Indices of deprivation [website](#), 2019 data

IMPACT

Improving health & confidence. Creating friendships & community.



IMPACT



*"My son (11) has made a brilliant group of friends from being part of Tulse Hill JFC for the last 3 years. It's really the only local friends he has beyond his school group. It also **motivates him to stay fit and he runs twice per week** to try and stay in the team."*

*"My son has grown in confidence and has acquired leadership skills after the club gave him the opportunity to captain his team. The weekly training and games **contribute to his fitness and encourages a healthy lifestyle**. The club is welcoming to everyone and fosters a diverse and inclusive community."*

Outcome: Improved physical health

Evidence from our project

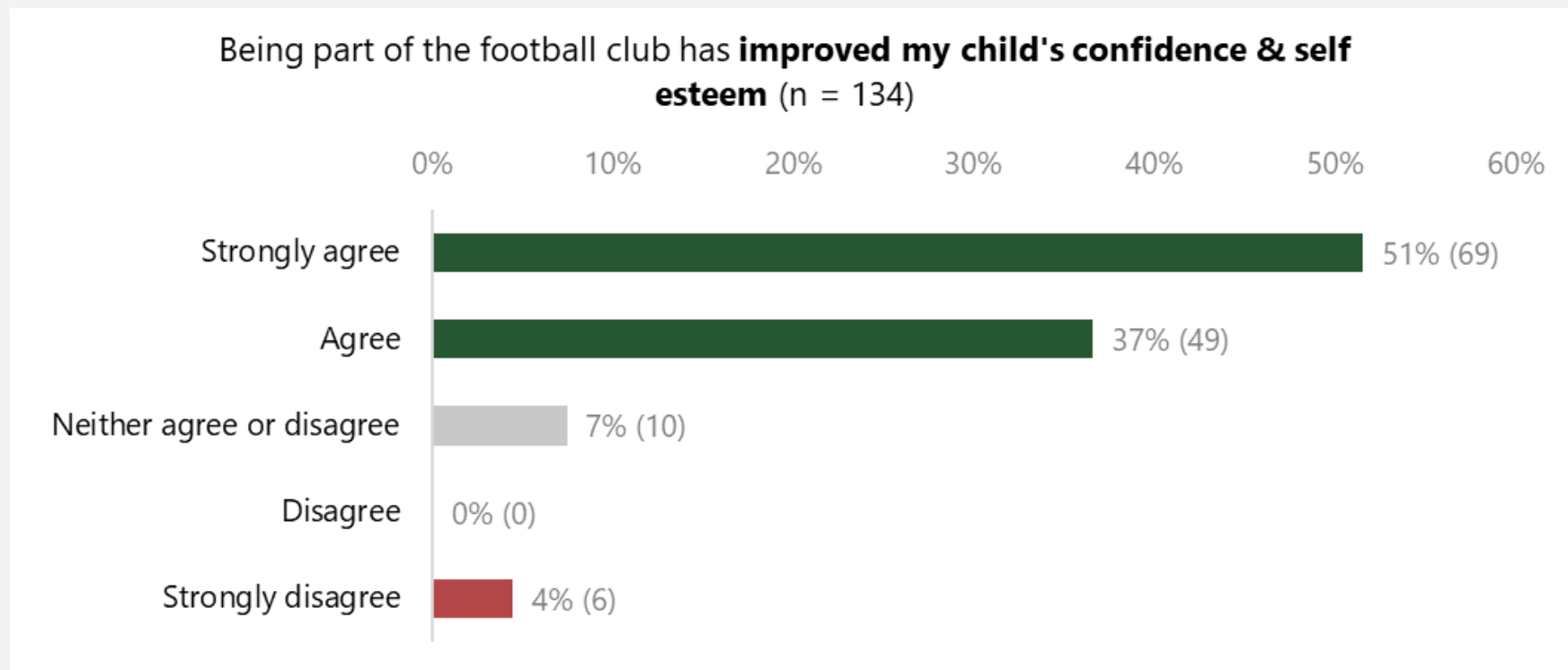
- 94% (126 parents) agreed or strongly agreed that playing for THJFC improved their child's physical health.
- There were no comments left to explain why the 4 parents disagreed.
- Out of the 67 impact stories shared, 16 explicitly mentioned improvements to their child's fitness.
- 65 of the impact stories were positive, with 2 neutral.

Context: what wider research tells us

- Football is one of the most effective ways for children to stay active. Studies consistently show it improves cardiovascular health, muscular strength, and overall fitness while also reducing risks of childhood obesity ^[3].
- The FA's Youth Development Review highlighted that grassroots football provides children with the recommended 60 minutes of daily activity ^[4].
- Research from UEFA found that regular football participation has stronger fitness benefits than many other team sports, thanks to its intensity and variety of movements ^[5].
- Evidence also shows the impact lasts: children who play football are more likely to stay active into adolescence and adulthood, supporting long-term health and wellbeing ^[6].

[3] Oja et al. (2015) BJSM: Health benefits of sport disciplines. [4] FA (2014) Youth Development Review. [5] UEFA (2019) Football and Health Report. [6] Coalter (2013) Sport for Development.

IMPACT



*"My child has found a spot she's comfortable with in the team that matches her personality. She feels like a team player and is happy to do her part ... **she's gaining a lot of confidence** in her defence spot."*

*"There is a lovely community around the club and my son, who is 5, has quickly got stuck in and embraced his little team. It's lovely to see them all interacting with each other and supporting each other. And **he's definitely grown in confidence on the football pitch as a result.**"*

Outcome: Improved confidence

Evidence from our project

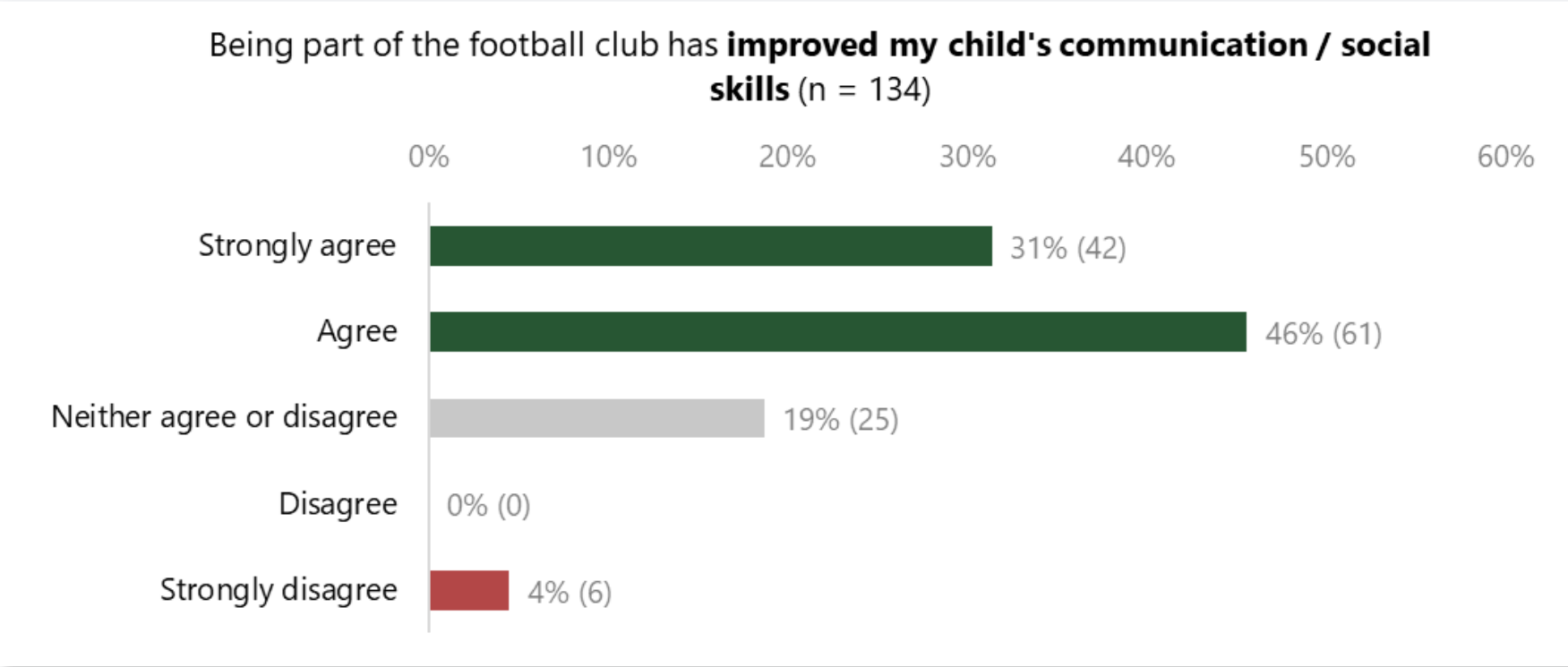
- 88% (118 parents) agreed or strongly agreed that playing for THJFC improved their child's confidence and self esteem.
- There were no comments left to explain why the 4 parents disagreed.
- Out of the 67 impact stories shared, 18 explicitly mentioned improvements to their child's confidence.

Context: what wider research tells us

- Sport participation, including grassroots football, is strongly linked with improvements in children's confidence and self-esteem.
- Studies show that being part of a team provides opportunities for achievement, recognition, and developing a sense of belonging, all of which build self-worth ^[7].
- Research also highlights that regular football participation boosts resilience and positive self-identity, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds ^[8].
- The FA's own guidance notes that supportive coaching environments help young players grow in confidence both on and off the pitch ^[9].

[7] Eime et al. (2013) BMC Public Health: Sport and psychosocial outcomes in youth.
[8] Coalter (2013) Sport for Development. [9] FA (2017) The FA Coaching Philosophy.

IMPACT



*"My son (U10) has gained a lot more confidence to take with him into school ... How the boys react with each other, on and off the pitch, when things go right and wrong is also something that is **having a positive effect on my son's social skills.**"*

*"Joining the Tulse Hill club in September 2024 as a training-only member of the U10s has **really helped my son to grow his social circle beyond just his school friends** ... likely ensuring he will see some recognisable faces at whichever school he ends up at."*

Outcome: Improved social skills

Evidence from our project

- 77% (103 parents) agreed or strongly agreed that playing for THJFC improved their child's communication / social skills.
- There were no comments left to explain why the 6 parents disagreed.
- Out of the 67 impact stories shared, 10 explicitly mentioned improvements to their child's social skills.

Context: what wider research tells us

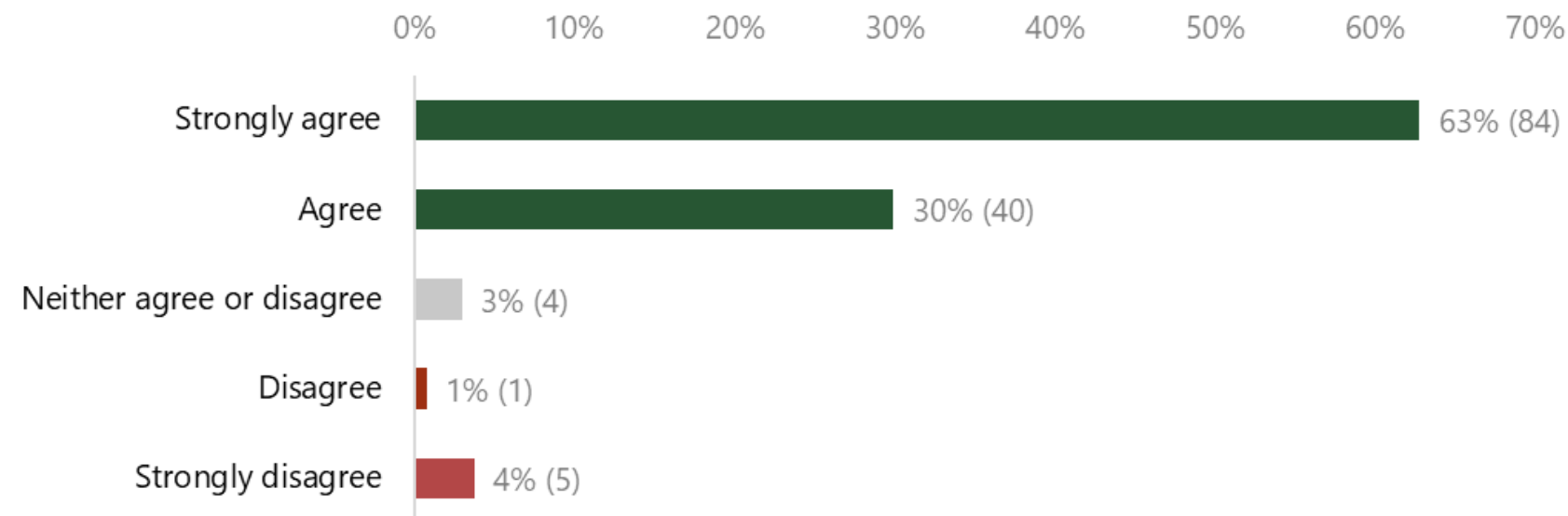
- Playing football helps children to develop communication, teamwork, and social skills.
- Studies show that structured sport gives young people opportunities to cooperate, resolve conflicts, and practice leadership, which supports wider social development ^[10].
- Evidence from Sport England notes that team sports like football particularly strengthen children's ability to interact positively with peers ^[11].
- International research also highlights that these skills transfer into school and everyday life, improving relationships and reducing social isolation ^[12].

[10] Holt et al. (2017) Youth Sport and Life Skills: Review of psychosocial benefits. [11] Sport England (2020) The Value of Sport. [12] Bailey et al. (2013) Journal of Sport Sciences: Sport, peer relations and social development.

IMPACT

Outcome: Made new friends & connections

Being part of the football club has **helped my child to make new friends & meet new people in the wider community** (n = 134)



*"It's just great to have another group of friends outside school. **Broadens relationships, perspectives, ideas** ... builds accountability, teamwork and respect."*

*"My child has definitely grown in confidence and **gained new friends from his football team**. He socialises with one of them on a regular basis. He enjoys the training and matches and it's great for his development."*

Evidence from our project

- 93% (124 parents) agreed or strongly agreed that playing for THJFC helped their child make new friends and connections.
- There were no comments left to explain why the 6 parents disagreed.
- Out of the 67 impact stories shared, 26 explicitly mentioned improvements to their child's friendships.

Context: what wider research tells us

- Grassroots football is widely recognised for its role in helping children form new friendships and build social networks.
- Research shows that sport participation increases opportunities to connect with peers outside of school, supporting a stronger sense of belonging ^[13].
- Studies also highlight that these friendships are a key reason children continue to play football, sustaining both participation and wellbeing ^[14].
- Football's inclusive team environment provides opportunities for children from different backgrounds to mix, helping to build community cohesion and mutual respect ^[15].

[13] Weiss & Smith (2002) Youth Sport Participation and Peer Relationships. [14] Jowett & Lavalley (2007) Social Psychology in Sport. [15] UEFA (2019) Football and Social Responsibility Report.

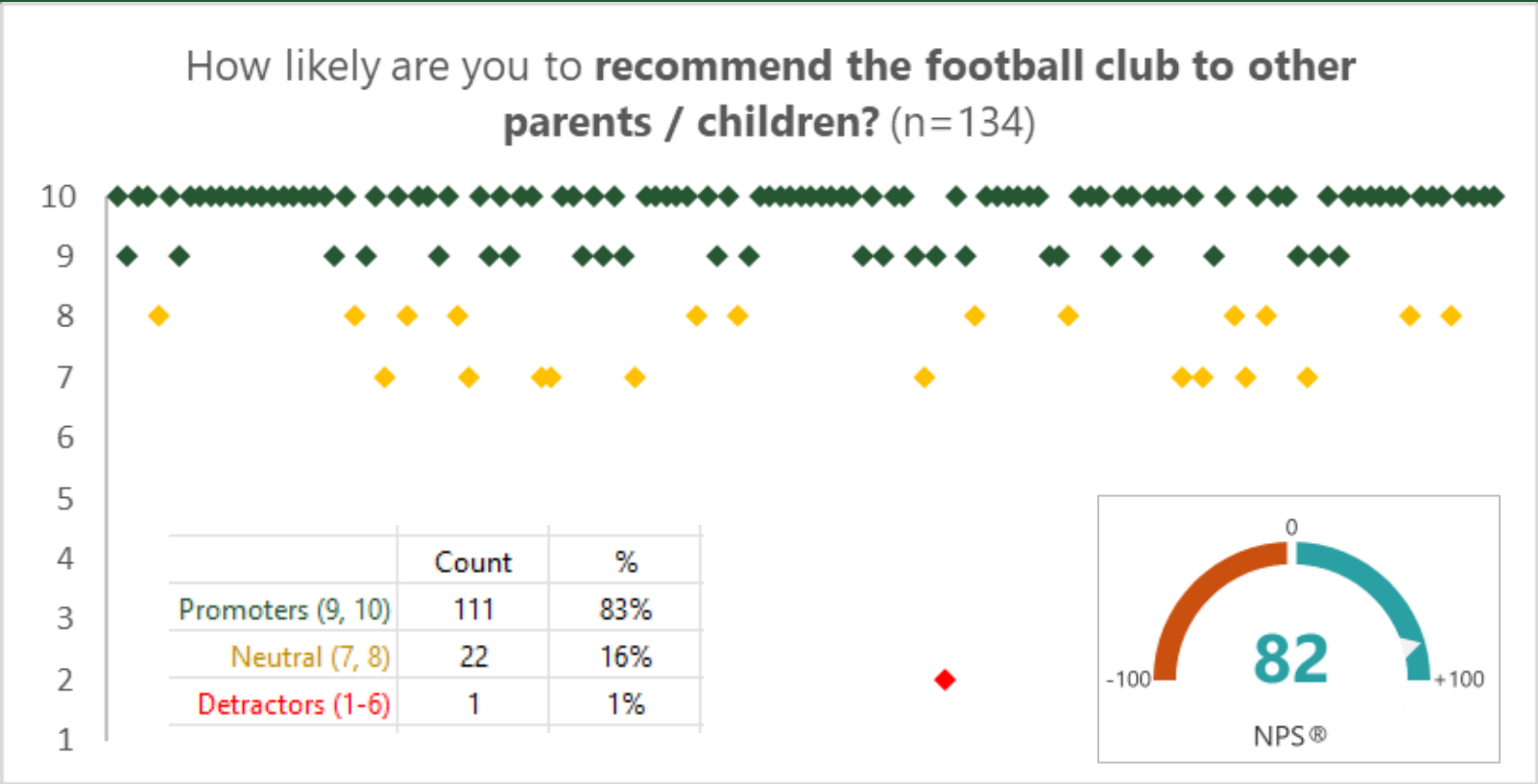
CLUB FEEDBACK

How well is the club being run?

- Of the 88 parents that responded to this question ~70% praised the **effective management of the club**. The next most common theme was the **strong community ethos** – several noted it’s a “brilliant community club.”
- Girls football** at the club was praised: 24 parents highlighted club’s inclusive approach, many describing football as empowering and confidence-building.
- Most parents would **recommend the club to others**, with a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 82.

“I think the club is run brilliantly, especially as it’s volunteers. The subs are reasonable and inclusive, compared to other clubs.”

“We really like everyone we’ve met who is coaching and running the club. A lot of community participation and spirit.”



How could the club improve?

- We received 29 responses from parents with constructive feedback on how the club could improve.
- Diversity & inclusion.** Parents emphasised the importance of maintaining diversity across teams and widening opportunities, including more female coaches and players who reflect the Tulse Hill area’s demographics.
- Girls’ football.** The club is encouraged to continue growing and investing in girls’ football as participation rises.
- Facilities.** Comments reinforced the club’s long-term aspiration for improved local facilities, including its own pitches and a clubhouse.
- Coaching & refereeing.** There was recognition of progress made, alongside calls for ongoing support to strengthen coaching and referee provision.
- Communication & organisation.** A few parents suggested clearer processes and more communication with families, particularly for new members that join the club.

WHAT THIS MEANS



At a time when many parents worry about their children's health, with pressures such as screen time and social media, **the role of grassroots sports clubs like THJFC has never been more important.**



The evidence in this report shows that playing football makes a **positive impact on children – now and in their future lives.** It helps to advance their physical, emotional and social development, and better integrates them with their wider community.



THJFC is a well-run club with a dedicated group of volunteer parents who are driven by its community ethos. The challenge for the club is how it can now **grow and offer these benefits to even more children in the local area, from all backgrounds.**



Growing means more facilities and increasing costs. To keep membership fees affordable, the club **is increasingly dependent on sponsorship.** It has a generous supporter in local business **Bespoke Windows** and will need to sustain such relationships long term.



Further research could demonstrate the club's wider impact, such as the experiences of the volunteer coaches and how parents have made new connections. For now, we can conclude **THJFC provides a vital community asset that benefits the local area,** that with the right support, can improve the lives of even more children in South London.





THANK YOU

THJFC would like to thank its members who provided the feedback that helped create this report, and to its many volunteers – officers, coaches, referees and parent helpers – that keep the club running.

The club wish to acknowledge the role of Dulwich-based **Bespoke Windows** who are its generous club sponsors.

PatchWorks

Better evidence. Stronger communities.

Would your organisation benefit from a report like this?

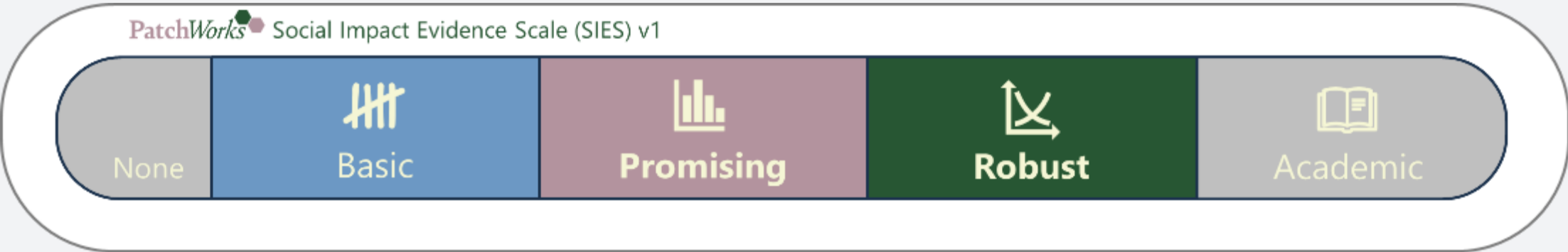
Set up a free call at PatchWorks.org.uk.

APPENDIX

The PatchWorks Social Impact Evidence Scale (SIES)

The SIES diagram below provides a simple scale of evidence strength. Most Community Organisation Partners we work with are at the start of the scale (None / Basic). Our aim is to elevate all Partners we work within up to Promising or Robust, so we can support their ambitions.

This scale enables us to ‘SIES’ (size) up where our Partners are before they start with us, and where we get them to after our Covaluation project.



What is it	Counts, quotes, stories.	Indirect / proxy measures, smaller sample size, no comparison.	Direct measures, larger sample size, comparable data set.	Large repeated data collection, formal academic methods.
What it shows	Proof of delivery: Demonstrates the activity happened.	Emerging proof of impact: indication that a change happened	Clear proof of impact: evidence of impact on anticipated outcomes	Proof for policy & scale: To influence at a national level
What's it for	Internal use, newsletters, early seed grants.	Pilots and smaller services, small– medium grants.	Ideal for most funders. Builds external credibility.	National bodies, influencing policy, published studies.

Data limitations & research caveats

- The evaluator of this project (Paddy, PatchWorks founder) is also involved in THJFC – he volunteers as the Club Secretary and a coach. Paddy used the football club as a test project for PatchWorks. The club did not pay Paddy for this work - it was done voluntarily.
- To minimise bias the outcomes and survey questions were codesigned with the club committee and validated by an external evaluation expert.