GUARDIAN BALLERS™

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GENESIS PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

We are mental and emotional wellbeing services that are empowering young people (ages 10-25) through education, sport and leadership journeys towards purpose and peace.

The Genesis Project has **created opportunities** for young people from global majority backgrounds and **under-represented communities**, to engage in basketball and positive mental health education. Extending award-winning strategies from work **cultivated at the Guardian HQ** in Coventry and Warwickshire, and the **reporting of positive mental health improvements** aligned with enhanced levels of access.

This launch phase provided a glimpse into how impact could extend across Wales, and how these interventions can become the 'go-to' sport and wellbeing solution!

"As a Welsh native and **Cardiff Met Graduate**, who migrated to the Midlands then founded Guardian Ballers, this **feels like coming home**'! We reach over **2000 young people every year** from diverse communities. This Genesis project is right in our 'court' as we share tools and sharpen focus on boosting Mental Health through the magnetism of Basketball!"

"We're thrilled to partner with Guardian Ballers to explore the powerful **connection between basketball and mental health**. As a sport rooted in teamwork, communication and resilience, basketball offers a unique platform to **support young people's wellbeing** both on and off the court. This partnership will help us embed positive mental health support into our culture and **create safe spaces** for young players to thrive."

Kieran Joseph
Founder & CEO of Guardian Ballers

Gavin Williams
COO of Basketball Wales

PROJECT AIMS

The aim of the Genesis Project was to create opportunities for young people from global majority backgrounds and under-represented communities to engage in basketball and positive mental health education.

The Genesis Project had two distinct phases: preparation and partnership building (April-August) and delivery and evaluation (Sept-March), with the following aims:

-To **launch the Guardian Ballers programme in community and school** settings in South Wales with a focus on supporting CPD of community and education staff;

-To **increase the opportunities for young people** and young adults (ages 10-25) from global majority backgrounds and underprivileged communities to engage in the sport of basketball and positive mental health education.

-To **build strong foundations of partnership**, delivery and evidence of impact within Cardiff and South Wales area that could be replicated in Mid and North Wales in the future.

These aims align closely with the vision in the **Basketball Wales Strategic plan** 2024-2030 for 'basketball to become widely recognised as the most socially inclusive and diverse sport in Wales'.

Image from Basketball Wales **new strategy showcase**

BASKETBALL WALES STRATEGIC PLAN

PARTNERSHIPS & LAUNCH

To initiate a sustainable project, we invested extensive resource into finding, discerning and establishing strong partnerships. From in-person connections, community visits through to online introductions, it enabled us to operate through a communities-first lens.

Once partnership with Basketball Wales was established, we embarked on a phase of partnership development: **54 stakeholders were engaged** from 3 educational institutions, public and third sector organisations, and community-based teams. A total of **138 hours were committed to establish the partnerships** and **deliver 14 different sessions**. From our understanding of community needs, we were able to **combine local context and strategic priorities** from Basketball Wales to design a targeted menu of sessions.

Genesis was launched when Kieran, Founder & CEO of Guardian Ballers **addressed Welsh ministers at a** Basketball Wales event **in the foyer of the Senedd/Welsh Assembly** Building. The speech unpacked how Guardian Ballers' organisational and missional journey aligns with Basketball Wales' strategy. The ministers, invited guests and **showcasing young people were inspired by this innovative** means of empowering improved wellbeing and the desire to reach into their respective communities.

Kieran Joseph during his speech at the Senedd

"Through the 'Genesis Project' here in Wales, we are collaborating to reach ethnically diverse, under-reached and under-represented communities through Basketball with Mental and Emotional Wellbeing Sessions in both Community and Education Settings."

PROJECT DELIVERY

We delivered sessions for under-represented populations in their local communities. We led Mental Health and Basketball sessions in Community Centres and Schools, facilitated Leader-equipping provision, and had opportunities to address funders and policymakers.

389
Participants

71%
Global Majority Ethnicities

66.5
Adult CPD Hours

Kieran, **Helen** and **Frank Joseph** at Butetown Pavillion, Cardiff

To demonstrate the **quality that could be replicated across Wales**, subject to further investment, we started in **South East Wales for 12 months from April 2025–26**. Most of our participants were empowered through core sessions which **combined mental health education with basketball** coaching. **131 data collection forms** were completed **with 48 full wellbeing assessments** concluded. The strength of this project could also be observed through **leader equipping and connections** made with 'hardest to reach' communities.

COLLABORATIVE EVENTS

A Mental Health event with emerging Basketball Club in Pill, Gwent and a community organisation.

WATCH OUR REEL

COMMUNITY CAMPS AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Holiday camps and educational activities in locations at the heart of their local community (including a Vaping Workshop)

YOUTH AND FAITH SETTING TAKEOVERS

Sessions in Youth Services, Church Community and Mosque groups.

WATCH OUR REEL

SCHOOL TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

Supporting specifically referred students at a global majority and a socio-economically deprived Schools.

TRAINING LEADERS

Equipping educators and providing intentional leadership development episodes.

IMPACT

To generate an accurate picture of the impact on a community, we combined quantitative statistics with qualitative reflections, illustrated by real-life impact stories.

We implemented a blend of data collection methods for this project. We encouraged **completion of "starter" and "evaluation" forms** with cohorts of young people who attended multiple sessions, or sessions where adults attended (e.g. the Newport "Scrimmage" event).

These forms **include the WEMWBS** (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale), which is a globally recognised, evidence-based tool where **individuals rate 14 statements as a measure of their mental wellbeing**.

For further depth, we **facilitated and documented reflections**: post-session from practitioners and volunteers, and after holistic delivery blocks from cohort and organisation leaders (received 1–3 weeks post-intervention).

Teenage girl from **Glenwood Church Llanedeyrn**

Helena and a young girl from **Glenwood Church Llanedeyrn**

A teenage **young lady attended a session** at a church community youth group. She had not played basketball and, **due to limited confidence**, was brought to the session by her **dad who provided ongoing encouragement**.

The high noise levels aggravated sensitivities associated with neurodiversity, but these were counteracted by the basketball and mental health components. **Her dad was so encouraged that his daughter had "stayed the whole session"** that he expressed interest in his two other sons (who both have autism diagnoses) attending a **future session**.

94%
wanted more Sessions in the future*

76%
received Mental Health Services for the first time*

88%
reported improvement in their Mental Health*

27%
Received Free School Meals or SEND provision*

92%
began to "understand themselves better"*

*Data from completed starter, evaluation and WEMWBS forms

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONING

Our network and influence enabled us to **host a special event in the under-reached area** of Pill, Gwent, introducing a partnership between Guardian Ballers, the newly established '**Newport Fire**' basketball club, and a community group called '**Peoples Prosperity Project**'.
In partnership with Cardiff Council city-wide youth services, we were able to **serve at-risk and less-reached communities within their evening programmes**, along with other established relationships such as a private mosque community. Combining the dynamics of strong youth worker relationships with free participation in sessions, not **requiring sports kit** or equipment, r**emoved barriers and maximised** opportunities for participation. As time progressed, numbers increased due to "word of mouth", culminating in a highlight **'Black History Month' event in Butetown Pavilion** Centre in October.
In February, we partnered with Lauren Thomas **from Cardiff & Vale UHB Public Health Team**, who delivered sessions **educating the young people about the health consequences of vaping**.
Guardian Ballers is able to "step into the gap" by facilitating opportunities in locations which might not be frequented by elite and club-based sessions.

THE "SCHOOLS SOURCE"

Guardian Ballers was founded to bring 'early help' within educational settings. We delivered **'targeted interventions' in two pilot high schools**. Teachers reported that the "structure, engagement, flow and inclusivity" of the basketball activities caused new and **heightened levels of engagement** in the sport, even resulting in girls choosing it over netball after school. Further comments on the tangible impact on young people were that **teachers were "noticing the difference"** in how participants are **now "open to express their emotions"**.

> **When are they coming back?**
>
> **Fitzalan school students**

Delivery Team at **Glenwood Church Llanedeyrn**

LEGACY THROUGH LEADERS

We love **multiplying our impact** through equipping Leaders. This occurred through intentional observation and model practise episodes, and **informal coaching with adult leaders**. The primary equipping occurred **through the 'Leaders Clinic'** workshop to Youth Workers and Undergraduate Students through a bespoke curriculum. The depth of impact was communicated in different forms.

63 Volunteer Hours

27 Adults equipped

138 Stakeholder Engagement Hours

54 Adults stakeholders engaged

Dr Lowri Cerys Edwards- Senior Lecturer in Sport and Physical Education, at Cardiff Metropolitan University, brought praise: "Feedback from the students was overwhelmingly positive. They praised Kieran's **engaging and enthusiastic delivery**, noting his ability to connect with the audience and make discussions about mental health meaningful through the practical lens of basketball. The **combination of physical activity and open conversation** was described as both informative and **inspiring**, prompting students to reflect on their own approaches to wellbeing ... while showcasing a real-world **example of leadership** and social responsibility in action. We hope that **our partnership can continue to grow** in the years ahead."

Leaders clinic at **Cardiff Met University**

"It's inspiring to be connected to a community that values inclusion, meaningful support, and human connection. I'm excited to see how it continues to grow and highlight the powerful role sport can play in driving real, lasting change."

Megan Star Fergusson, Sports Science & Health (BSc) student at Cardiff Met University on LinkedIn

"Your team created a safe, supportive environment where every student felt seen, heard, and empowered. We've seen noticeable improvements in their attitude, resilience, and willingness to reflect"

Gareth Janaway, PE Teacher

VISION

Guardian Ballers evaluated this launch phase as a success due to the trust, clarity and partnership-value demonstrated by Basketball Wales and further endorsed through Sport Wales. This was just the beginning, so the best is yet to come!

Guardian Ballers has grown from two to nine paid staff (2023-26) and we deliver programmes **reaching over 2000 young people annually** in the Midlands. Our vision aligns with the Basketball Wales Strategic vision for "basketball to become widely recognised as the **most socially inclusive and diverse sport** in Wales". We believe we are **well-equipped** to provide a solution to the hidden welsh youth 'mental health pandemic'.

In a recent Public Health Wales survey (2024), 18-29 year olds were amongst the least likely population group which know *"what actions they could take to support their mental wellbeing."* A further rationale to **focus on youth-targeted interventions** originates from the statistic that 24% of secondary pupils reported very high levels of mental health symptoms. (School Health Research Network, 2021-22).

Guardian Ballers plans to **develop our local and national impact** in Wales in three ways:
♾ LONGER-TERM: **Establish staff members** that deliver longer-term interventions to under-reached, diverse communities, in *"their home"*.
DIVERSITY INCOME STREAMS: **Build impactful work** through a diverse portfolio of grant and donation, trading and public-sector commissioned funding streams.
MULTIPLY KNOWLEDGE: **Become an 'expert' in Wales** for using the magnetism of Sport to generate statistically significant impact on the wellbeing of young communities.

We are ready to advance our Basketball and Mental and Emotional Wellbeing Services to **empower more young people** so they can move towards greater experiences of Peace and Purpose.

Eastern High School Cardiff students

THANK YOU

Diolch yn fawr pawb - 'rydym ni'n gwerthfawrogi chi i gyd! Thank you very much everyone- you are appreciated and seen!

We want to **amplify our gratitude to Basketball Wales and Sport Wales** for placing their investment behind their mission through partnership with Guardian Ballers on the Genesis Project. This launch was made possible and strengthened through many stakeholders across Wales; we acknowledge them as our team of champions. Above all, we want to **celebrate those who have been empowered** through the programmes to say: 'You are now a Guardian Baller, step with greater peace and purpose!'

This is a moment where vision has crossed over into impact- it works! Therefore, our Guardian Ballers Team are excited as we aim to move from 'launch' to 'sustainability'! The African proverb says 'it takes a village to raise a child'; it's now time for a united-collective to take this impact to the next level!

Kieran Joseph
Founder & CEO of Guardian Ballers