Why I believe RugbyWorks

One of the best days of my year happens every July when we hold the annual RugbyWorks Awards. I get to hand out accolades to an incredible group of young people who’ve had amazing years, performing well above the expectations they, and others, had set for them.

It’s not my first chance to meet these girls and boys – I get to know them throughout the year as I visit their coaching sessions or help host their regular rugby tournaments – but seeing them suited and booted with happy, smiling faces, it’s easy to picture their bright futures stretching out ahead.

A couple of years ago, that might have been harder for outsiders to envision. Cast out from mainstream education for whatever reason, with statistics saying they have almost no chance to succeed, it would be understandable for many of them to lose confidence and direction, even at such a young age.

That’s why I set up Dallaglio RugbyWorks. Because I don’t believe young teenagers like these should be squeezed out of society when they can instead become positive, valuable contributors to our world. And that’s why I love that day in July every year. Because, after spending time with our programme, I know every young person in that room has greater power to shape their own destiny, for good.

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Lawrence Dallaglio OBE, Dallaglio RugbyWorks Founder
"ONE OF THE BEST DAYS OF MY YEAR HAPPENS EVERY JULY WHEN WE HOLD THE ANNUAL RUGBYWORKS AWARDS."
Looking back on 2016-17

It’s been a huge year for us at Dallaglio RugbyWorks as we’ve worked hard to both sharpen our focus and deepen our impact.

We tweaked our name to reflect the single – and singular – vision of our maturing organisation. We worked with some outstanding partners to dramatically improve the way we monitor and evaluate our work. And we made the bold decision to move more of our coaching programme in-house so that we take greater responsibility for our young people.

At the same time, we put into action our plan to add a third year to the Dallaglio RugbyWorks cycle, supporting the hardest to reach teenagers in the UK out of their Alternative Provision schools and into the often bewildering world of mainstream education and employment.

We were also thrilled to welcome Charlie Taylor to our Board of Trustees. Charlie is a renowned and respected leader in our field: having served as Head Teacher of the Willows Special School and the coalition government’s expert advisor on behaviour, he’s now the Chair of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. Charlie’s appointment is a real endorsement of our intent and we’re making the most of his extensive knowledge and experience.

Of course, we do all of this because we believe in our young people and we’re determined to see that they remain in further education, employment and training on their way to happy and fulfilling futures. It’s hard, all-consuming work, but as you’ll read later, our key indicators continue to suggest we’re making a difference and sustaining higher levels of EET.

I’d like to thank every supporter, volunteer, fundraiser, business, coach or colleague who has helped us get here. You should be proud of your contribution and I hope you’ll stay with us - with so much more planned, I know that next year will be even bigger.

Rachel Roxburgh, CEO
“WE DO ALL OF THIS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.”
What is Dallaglio RugbyWorks?

Our mission is to help teenagers excluded from mainstream education get into, and stay, in education, employment or training.

We achieve this through our three-year, personalised programme for young people enrolled in Alternative Provision (AP) schools. Working with Years 10 to 11 as part of the school curriculum, our dedicated coaches use rugby and classroom activities to develop critical life skills such as communication, leadership, teamwork and aspiration.

Each pair of RugbyWorks coaches leads small groups of just 8 to 10 young people, establishing the trust and support that’s vital to their mentorship. They also ensure that all RugbyWorks participants are exposed to essential workplace experience – employability taster days, workshops and placements – that lets them aspire to positive, productive futures.

Now, in Year 12, we also work with our young people on a one-to-one basis as we support their difficult, enforced transition out of AP and back into the mainstream system. By continuing our relationship, we help at-risk youngsters sustain further education, traineeship or employment for the long-term.

For more information about the RugbyWorks process, visit www.dallagliorugbyworks.com

“The primary challenge for so many of the children in Alternative Provision is to give them the confidence to take up the offers of work or education and, critically, to stick with it for the long haul. It is here that Dallaglio RugbyWorks is able to make such a difference, giving young people the support they need to develop the self-belief, the determination and the resilience to go on to become successful adults.”

Charlie Taylor, Chairman of the Youth Justice Board
Josh’s story – Year 1, Bristol

“You can’t get me up here, can you?” These words, shouted down from the school roof, were the first our coaches heard from Josh. The tough challenge they knew lay ahead was underpinned by Josh’s chaotic home life as he bounced around different family members, never truly able to call anywhere home.

As a boy who’d experienced his share of empty promises, the reward-for-commitment ethos of RugbyWorks was tough for Josh to buy into. And despite being a gifted sportsman, rugby’s unfamiliarity was initially a barrier for him too. Josh’s coaches needed to work hard on developing his self-confidence. They improvised, bringing in tweaks from football and inventing hybrid sports that helped him slowly find his feet – and his voice.

Steadily, Josh’s trust in his coaches grew. Although things didn’t always go to plan – public failure amongst his peers was always traumatic – this emerging trust meant that, even when he vented and stormed off, Josh started to listen as his coaches calmed him down.

Given his starting point, Josh’s transformation during just one year of RugbyWorks has been enormous. As his coaches build on this early growth in year two, they’re hoping Josh fulfils his promise to become the group role model they know he can be.
What's new this year?

As we learn from each year of our existence, we continue to develop our organisation and approach.

This year, we introduced many significant innovations, including formally extending our programme into a third year for our London participants. While these Year 12s benefitted from one-to-one mentoring designed to keep them in education, employment or training, we made sure that our coaches were not only able to meet their needs, but also to still maintain RugbyWorks’ day-to-day delivery within our partner schools.

We also got much smarter about our data collection processes. At the start of the school year, teachers now complete a standardised short-term outcome behaviour matrix which is regularly reviewed by our coaches as our programme progresses. Coaches are also able to upload their diaries into our central system after each session, meaning we can provide much more dynamic, continuous and individualised monitoring.

Having lots of data is one thing, but having the means to interpret it is quite another. That’s why we recruited a full-time Impact Analyst to manage our information platforms. This new role started bearing fruit immediately, as we established calculators that help us make the most of the time we spend with our young people. We’re delighted to have upskilled one of our own coaches for this post. His on-the-ground experience combined with the expertise of our key strategic partner, Impetus-PEF, is a huge boost towards driving the outcomes we want for our young people.
"As we learn from each year of our existence, we continue to develop our organisation and approach."
What are young people up against?

Meet Jade. She’s only 14 and has just been kicked out of mainstream education. You might not know her hair colour, favourite band or best friend’s name, but there are some things you do already know about her. She’s four times more likely to live in poverty than the classmates she’s left behind. She’s more likely than not to be coping with a recognised mental health issue. She has almost no chance of getting five decent GCSEs. As part of a system where most inmates were excluded from school as kids, her prospects include the very real possibility of going to prison.

It’s a tough enough time to be a teenager as it is. Jade is now expected to stay in education or training until she’s 18, but there’s no Alternative Provision schooling post-GCSE, so she’ll have to navigate her own way back into the mainstream system. As for finding a job, with youth unemployment still three times higher than the overall average, it’ll be far from easy.

And if Jade goes on to have children of her own? Rinse and repeat. The cycle of child poverty is tough to break given such limited opportunities.

At Dallaglio RugbyWorks, we don’t think you should know that much about a 14-year-old girl you’ve never met. We don’t give up on marginalised young people. We exist to change their expectations and their futures by helping them recognise behavioural patterns and improve their employability prospects.

We do this through:

Year 1 { Engagement minimising the impact of their past

Year 2 { Integration making better decisions in the present, and...

Year 3 { Achievement planning to ensure a long term successful future
In the 2016-17 academic year, Dallaglio RugbyWorks worked with 201 young people in four key geographical areas: London, Bristol, Newcastle and South Wales. Thanks to the local knowledge of our trained coaches, we’re able to provide a consistent programme for all our young people whilst paying attention to important regional issues.

For example, we know that 10 to 19-year-olds in North East England are twice as likely to self-harm as those in London, that substance abuse in Bristol is among the highest in the country and that the percentage of young NEETs in South East Wales is higher than in any area of England.

Differentiating factors such as these are why there’s no one-size-fits-all solution to sustained EET and why we will always ensure RugbyWorks operates with local sensitivity and nuance.
A year in the life of a Dallaglio RugbyWorks coach

Term 1

My playing days are long gone, but I still feel the September excitement as I dust off my boots after the summer break and look ahead to the challenges a new school year always brings.

I’m continually shocked by how much familiar faces change during just a few weeks away and our first step is to establish a settled group dynamic. Everyone jostles for position in the power structure of a new school year and fresh arrivals from the mainstream system add another spark to a combustible mix.

We’re vigilant for the warning signs – the best way to stop a fight is not to let it start – but often, even our experience leaves us powerless to prevent incidents kicking off. It’s this first term when we intervene most in fights and violence.

To dampen volatility and to swell engagement, our initial aims are simple: keep sessions upbeat, fun and light-hearted. Even though everyone here has agreed to participate, total buy-in from rugby novices is a long way off. Borrowing from football, basketball and netball, we chip away at preconceptions through hybrid games barely resembling rugby at first. As we get a feel for the group’s comfort zone, we slowly bleed in rugby concepts, with a heavy emphasis on teamwork, respect and discipline.

We’re all still getting to know each other, but we’re already working towards putting together a team for our first London RugbyWorks tournament in November.

Term 2

The November tournament gives us a clear picture of how we did during the first term. Playing competitively as a team, against other young people, is a revealing test of character. It’s also a formative experience that binds all of us together, ushering in a second term where our relationships deepen.

Focusing less on rugby, we begin addressing the skills needed to sustain a future in education, employment or training. By returning week-after-week as promised, we’re differentiating ourselves from many of the adults these young people know. Our basic reliability creates respect and trust, which helps us get to learn each young person’s story and together plan their future. It’s a bittersweet process. These young people, who we care about, tell us about their pasts in detail that can be difficult to hear.

We pair every young person with suitable Employability Days during this term. When they experience a Macquarie Bank boardroom, a McGee construction site or a Halfords Autocentre, we find out a lot about their interests, abilities and aspirations. These days are especially critical for our Year 11 students, just six months away from leaving AP and preparing for GCSEs.

Their elder peers’ exam prep gives Year 10 students a chance to step up on the rugby field as we head towards March’s National RugbyWorks tournament. It’s another chance for everyone to show what they’ve learned, but on the biggest stage yet.
Term 3

Looming GCSEs mean mounting pressure for Year 11s everywhere, but it’s particularly intense for our young people. Shockingly, only 1 in 100 at AP schools achieve the benchmark of 5 A* to C GCSE grades.

Faced with these odds, our sessions offer a release valve. Fear typically displays as apathy and denial for our young people. We may have known them for two years, but many begin to close up again, and our words of encouragement can go unheard. It’s hard to watch their doubts resurface, but we hope our calm, reassuring presence breaks through.

Working as a pair of coaches is particularly helpful this term because, while the Year 11s require greater attention, there are still sessions to run for the Year 10s. Now is the time when we ask them to lead by example and pass on their experience by encouraging the Year 9s who join for taster sessions.

July’s London tournament brings down the curtain on our RugbyWorks year. We hope to see our younger participants back for more after summer. As for those leaving AP, we’ll see them on GCSE results day. Whatever the outcome, we’ll be there as they re-join the mainstream system, providing one-to-one mentoring and support through perhaps the most important stage of our journey together.
Measuring our impact

We measure our impact on young people and society in two distinct ways.

Tracking behaviour

Young people end up in Alternative Provision schools for many reasons and this gives rise to just as many unique challenges for each individual. The only way we can ensure that every young person we work with gets the tailored support they need is to avoid treating them as a single group and instead track them individually.

Our newly-developed short-term outcome matrix helps with this. We've collated a number of characteristics that employers say prospective candidates must demonstrate for them to be considered “work-ready”. At the start and end of the academic year, teachers and coaches assess their perceptions of each participant’s behaviour against these characteristics. The results of their assessments are compared, calibrated and used to tailor our coaching appropriately throughout the programme. The aim is that each young person will develop as we interact with them in targeted ways.

In addition, we monitor associated by-products of behavioural change, such as GCSE performance, as we look to improve commitment and longer-term prospects.

Tracking employability

Our work on improving the employability of young people is based on evidence published by Dr Anthony Mann. Dr Mann’s study, undertaken for the Education and Employers Taskforce, highlights a direct link between 14- to 19-year olds’ exposure to employers and their eventual life prospects. Work experience and work-related talks help increase confidence in career goals, with those young adults who recall four or more such activities at school five times less likely to be NEET, and earning, on average, 16% more than their peers who recall no such activities. These findings are unconnected to attaining higher qualifications.

Such a clear boost to sustained EET encouraged us to set ourselves a challenge: help every young person taking part in Dallaglio RugbyWorks experience four Taster Days and Skills Workshops during Years 10 and 11. This bold step requires us to generate significantly more opportunities through new and existing corporate partnerships.

We’re also helping young people get into work in other practical ways. By collaborating with a variety of businesses, we’ve created a “passport” that guides young people through the documents and processes they’ll encounter as they apply for jobs. This includes useful advice on CVs, references, interview and public speaking practice and, crucially for the age we live in, developing a professional online presence.
Dan’s story – Year 2, Newcastle

Dan first came to us in 2015 as a Year 10 student. Back then, his tendency to let frustrations boil over and to lash out at peers and staff was holding back his talent for sport. Patience was crucial. Dan’s coaches listened and slowly helped him manage his anger.

Something big happened for Dan as he joined us for year two: he signed up with a local rugby club. Suddenly, he was excited to come to RugbyWorks and share everything he learned there. His coaches quickly spotted the change and handed Dan greater leadership, allowing his confidence to flourish.

It wasn’t long before a proud Dan led his school out onto Wasps’ Ricoh Arena pitch for the RugbyWorks National Tournament. It turned into a tough day for his team but, whereas his teammates would once have feared his outbursts, they now gravitated towards him to provide a calm and supportive presence.

His leadership on that day was indicative of Dan’s growth during two years of RugbyWorks. Whether in group sessions or at a successful Employability Day with Bidfood, he had become an example for others to follow. It’s a thrill to know that Dan achieved the grades he needed and has now moved on, studying Construction at college and building a bright future for himself.

“Whether in group sessions or at a successful Employability Day with Bidfood, Dan became an example for others to follow.”

Lindsay, Newcastle Coach, Dallaglio RugbyWorks

A snapshot of Dan’s matrix scores from Term 1 to Term 3 showing improvement in all areas
How did we do in 2016-17?

For the second year running, young people who frequently attend RugbyWorks show significant behavioural improvement across the board.

**Behaviour**

Our independently analysed results show that we achieved a small, consistent, average improvement in all areas of tracked behaviour across the programme. This looks like great news that can help improve the potential of our young people. For the time being, we’re treating this with cautious optimism – our small sample size means we’re still establishing clear, year-on-year improvements.

Last year, we reported a positive correlation between perceived improved behaviour and increased frequency of RugbyWorks attendance. We’re delighted to report the same correlation this year. In one region, where our young people are in residential schools and are therefore more consistent attendees, the average behavioural improvement was significantly higher than in non-residential regions, where we face truancy and other attendance issues. We’re very proud of backing up our previous success, although the small sample size means we take nothing for granted and will continue to analyse our ongoing impact.

We also note that those starting out with the lowest behaviour scores make the biggest improvements if they stick with us – yet another reason for our continued effort and optimism.

In this year’s results, our GCSE cohort appear to have outperformed their peers in Alternative Provision. 9% of our young people sitting exams achieved Level 2 English and Maths, against the national average for those in AP schools of just 3%. Whilst pleasing, we should note that this is still some significant distance from the mainstream school average of over 59%.

A new law in Wales, requiring parental consent to access GCSE results, presented us with an unexpected challenge this year. Consequently, our local coaches visited every participant’s parent to request access for our data analysis. Sadly, the majority of parents didn’t see the value of sharing their children’s GCSE results.

While we’ve put in place measures to address this next year, both the policy and the response reflect the complex social and legal landscape we operate in.

**Employability**

We’re thrilled to share the great news that 68% of our young people remain in employment, education or training a full year after leaving their Alternative Provision school. By comparison, only half of their peers are still in EET just six months after AP ends. This is exactly what Dallaglio RugbyWorks exists for – to remove at-risk young people from the cycle of unemployment and its associated outcomes. If maintained, this sustained EET has significant benefits – for these specific young people, their children and the whole of our society – of which we can be extremely proud.

For 2016-17, we set ourselves the stiff challenge of increasing the number of Employability Days each participant is exposed to by 400%. We fell short of this aim, but we understand the reasons why and have put in place measures to address them. For example, we’ve improved our timetabling with businesses to ensure we receive fewer schedule amendments. This means greater date certainty for schools, allowing them to release more students.

Thanks to better in-house data analysis, we also know that our average Employability Day attendance is 74%, so we can fill more placements by offering opportunities to more young people. With this knowledge, we’ve kept the same target for 2017-18 and believe we’re better equipped to achieve it.
Total number of Dallaglio RugbyWorks young people: 201

75 young people from 26 schools throughout the UK took part in our 26 Employability Days in 2017

Year 11 Leavers’ Destinations
64 young people

Year 12 Mentoring
31 young people

Gender breakdown
46 female
155 male

% Achieved Level 2 English and Maths vs 3% National Alternative Provision School average
9%

% still in Education, Employment or Training 12 months after leaving school, compared to only 50% from AP nationally after 6 months
68%

Our session numbers demonstrate our plans for rapid growth

- 2014/15: 441
- 2015/16: 510
- 2016/17: 563
- 2017/18: 1008 (target)
Abigail’s story – Year 3, London

Having joined RugbyWorks in 2014, Abigail is one of our first young people to complete the programme’s newly added third year of one-on-one mentoring. You may remember her case study in last year’s report.

Initially shy yet angry, Abigail worked hard to control her emotions during the first two years, while her coaches gently encouraged her passion for jewellery-making. In 2016, her dreams were realised as she became an apprentice at Goldsmiths, the UK’s largest quality jeweller.

Since then, Abigail and her coach have continued to work together to develop her self-belief, including taking to the stage to talk in front of 600 guests at RugbyWorks’ prestigious 8Rocks event – a daunting moment for anyone.

Abigail’s career is blooming at Goldsmiths, she’s running workshops for the public and she’s just displayed her designs at a three-week arts fair. As she looks to the future and plans her own successful jewellery range, her school challenges are now distant, if painful, memories. But it’s not the end of her RugbyWorks relationship. Abigail’s just received her very first commission: a wedding ring for her coach and mentor.

"Under her own admission, Abi had a lot of aggression when she started RugbyWorks and the sessions helped her to release this each week. Despite her struggles, she threw herself into everything and began to focus on the future which culminated in her winning the Most Improved Young Person at our 2016 Awards. I’m so pleased that Abi has secured her apprenticeship – she has a real talent and a bright future ahead of her."

Will, London Coach, Dallaglio RugbyWorks
Becoming a Dallaglio RugbyWorks business partner

When Lawrence says, “You are what you’re exposed to,” he’s talking to businesses as well as young people. Partnering with Dallaglio RugbyWorks is about more than simply connecting young people with a place to work. We’re helping businesses uncover hidden new talent and interact with the next generation of clients and customers while providing innovative, rewarding ways to build staff engagement.

Thanks to tailored group coaching sessions followed by post-school, one-to-one support, Dallaglio RugbyWorks participants are significantly more likely to stay in their apprenticeships and work roles than their AP school peers. This gives businesses the confidence to build long-term career pathways that benefit everyone.

If you’d like to find out how to expose your business to a pool of untapped potential, get in touch by using our contact details on the back of this report.

“Dallaglio RugbyWorks participants are significantly more likely to stay in their apprenticeships and work roles than their AP school peers.”
What’s next for Dallaglio RugbyWorks?

We’re delighted to be bringing the RugbyWorks programme to two brand new regions. From 2017-18, alongside London, Wales, Bristol and Newcastle, we begin operating in the North West and East Midlands too, connecting us with 12 new schools overseen by four full-time, in-house coaches. We’re excited by this opportunity to extend our impact and we continue to investigate ways of responsibly increasing our UK coverage.

After a successful pilot, we’re maintaining our Year 12 one-to-one mentoring scheme in London and have also added the third year to our programme in Wales. RugbyWorks in Wales is now overseen by our own, directly-employed coaches, meaning we can take a more consistent, national approach and have greater control of our own outcomes. This model of three, in-house years will ultimately be rolled out across all our regions.

As our organisation matures, we’re growing strategically too. We’ve doubled our headcount – from 12 to 24 – to not only meet the demands of the programme but also to improve our day-to-day management and give us greater insight into our impact. Alongside additional coaches, we’ve recruited two new Regional Operations Managers. Reporting to the Head of Operations, they’ll manage the relationships between schools and coaches and keep track of our delivery quality. Coupled with the benefits now being realised by our Impact Analyst, we’re much better placed to accurately monitor all aspects of our performance as-live throughout the year.

We look forward to collaborating with more young people, more coaches and more businesses in the coming year to help teenagers excluded from mainstream education get into, and stay, in education, employment or training.
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