

PM signs for football team going on attack against radicalisation



David Cameron is to play in a football match in Downing Street

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PRIME Minister David Cameron is to play in a football match in Downing Street with teenagers from a Kensington-based gang-busting project as the Government backs its pioneering drive against radicalisation.

The PM is to join a team of west London youngsters in a game against a youth side from Molenbeek, the Belgian town at the centre of recent terror atrocities.

The show game will be held in the street outside No 10 to highlight the Government's pledge to get behind plans to roll out the Kensington scheme all over London.

The Kensington-based Unity of Faiths Foundation's Football for Unity project, hailed for scoring new futures for more than a thousand disadvantaged young people in west London, is to

be spread across the capital as the smart new game plan against the city's problem with gangs, knife crime and radicalisation.

David Cameron is to put on TUFF FC's strip in a promotion game for the solidarity-scoring scheme in Downing Street this summer, as No 10 throws its weight behind the award-winning programme which has taken hundreds of youngsters off the streets to go for goals.

In a remarkable signing, TUFF's football programme has got the Prime Minister to join the team effort to lead at-risk teenagers away from knife crime, gang culture, radicalisation and the problems of poverty.

Mr Cameron is onside to play in a five-a-side game to be staged in Downing Street in July to demonstrate the Government's backing for the teen-aid strategy run by Dr Shamender Talwar and Ms Anna Prior from their office in Kensington High Street.

The TUFF project has also won the backing of Euro MPs and organisers hope that they can shortly sign London's new mayor Sadiq Khan to join its supporters' club too as the scheme is now rolling out from the West to North and East London too – and into other sports.

In less than a year, the game plan to unite young Londoners from different faiths and religions by having them play football together has mushroomed from helping just a handful of vulnerable youngsters to more than 1,000 turn up for regular training at their West London grounds.

Last month TUFF's Under-16s side won the London FA Saturday Youth League championship and the TUFF project has won the Pride Of Britain sports award for its work in uniting London's youth.

Now its Football For Unity project is expanding to become Rugby For Unity too. At the recent Unity of Faiths Festival hand over torch ceremony at Saracens' ground, the Allianz Park stadium in Barnet, backed by the mayors of Ealing and Barnet and cheered on by a 20,000 crowd, the young footballers exchanged a symbolic torch – London's 1948 Olympic Torch – with players from Saracens' youth side to mark the 4th Unity of Faiths Festival from west London to north London and the rugby club joining the movement to unite all teenagers through sport.

On August 29 the Allianz Park stadium will be the site of the 4th Unity of Faiths festival, staged to bring together Londoners of all different faiths, religions and cultures. The festival, which has been welcomed by The



Anna Prior, top, and Dr Shamender Talwar, came up with the football project. MEP Syed Kamall will take a squad of footballers to Belgium

Queen, started in Southall in 2011 and attracted 8,000 people to Southall Park, with 76,000 people in 23 countries watching the music-based gala online.

The following year, 26,000 joined the festival and a crowd of more than 30,000 is expected when it moves to Barnet for this year's Bank Holiday event.

Dr Talwar said: "TUFF's football project is spreading across London. We now attract kids from Southall, Tower Hamlets, Camden, north Kensington, Hanwell and Hayes and many other parts of London to our weekly training sessions.

"It is spreading from west London to east London and north London. It is becoming not just Football For Unity but now Rugby For Unity as we have been meeting with the English Cricket Board and they are very keen to roll out the scheme to their game.

"Through all sorts of sports, this is not just the answer to all sorts of problems which affect our teenagers – gang culture, knife crime, radicalisation – but it is the proven answer, it works. TUFF's sports projects tackle the social problems that are out there.

"We have saved countless kids who have been at risk to falling astray to all sorts of dangers by uniting them in the team spirit of playing great British games and, in doing so, teaching them great British values of fair-

ness, trust, the rule of law and respect for all others.

"Our kids come from all sorts of different backgrounds, religions and faiths, but we have Muslim kids playing with Jewish kids playing with Christians kids because football isn't about different faiths, it is about having faith in each other and much can grow from that.

"This scheme provides the solution to the problems of diversity that we see on the streets.

"Team unity is giving hope and aspiration to kids who felt that they had no future. They may have different backgrounds and beliefs but they are brought to be one together in the game.

"Football For Unity is achieving precisely what our new Mayor Sadiq Khan wants to do for London, uniting us all, and we very much hope that he will join this glorious team effort."

Next month TUFF's football players will further expand into Europe when London MEP Syed Kamall takes a squad of the teenagers to Molenbeek, the Belgian town at the heart of recent terror atrocities, for a high-profile match against a local youth side in a Football Against Radicalisation game and meet with leaders of Europe at the European Parliament.

A return match between the London and Molenbeek sides will be staged in Downing Street in July, with the local team fielding David Cameron.

Home violence 'best' response

VICTIMS of domestic violence in Fulham receive the "best support and protection in London", according to town hall chiefs.

The borough's police team has the highest conviction rate of any force in London for such cases that are brought before the courts.

Officers have been working with Hammersmith and Fulham council on a criminal justice partnership – the Impact Project – that aims to tackle domestic violence and offer support to victims.

The team, which is based at Hammersmith police station, comprises professionals from the Shepherd's Bush Housing Group and the charity Standing Together Against Domestic Violence.

Councillor Sue Fennimore, the council's cabinet member for social inclusion, said: "Victims of domestic violence often feel scared, isolated and vulnerable, and can be daunted by the court process. Often this means cases never make it to court and perpetrators remain unpunished.

"Our conviction figure is testament to both the resolve of those people the project has helped and the great collaborative working of the partner groups.

"We are now determined to build on this success and do even more to bring offenders to justice and stop domestic violence before it takes place."

Gasworks site housing boost

TOWN Hall bosses have revoked a key planning rule that could open the door for a redevelopment of the former Fulham Gasworks.

National Grid has been in discussions with the Berkeley Group over a potential redevelopment of the site.

The six gasholders, which were built in 1824, have been redundant for four years and are due to be demolished.

The seven-acre site in Sands End is considered to be suitable for new homes but developers have faced obstacles in the planning process.

However, council planners have now scrapped an important rule regarding sites containing hazardous substances that could kick-start the scheme.

St William Homes LLP – the partnership set up by National Grid and Berkeley in 2014 – is expected to submit plans to redevelop the site.

Tea and toast to Queen at 90

FANS of the Royal Family will be marking Her Majesty The Queen's 90th birthday with a special tea dance in Hammersmith.

Organisers are encouraging residents to slip on their dancing shoes for the birthday celebration, which takes place at the Grove Neighbourhood Centre next month.

Events are being held over the weekend of June 10 to June 12 to wish the monarch many happy returns.

The Patron's Lunch – a mass street party on the Mall – is the showpiece event, alongside a service of thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral and the traditional Trooping the Colour ceremony.

The tea dance, which will cater for a maximum of 45 people, takes place on Friday, June 10 between 2pm and 4.30pm.



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