

Project name: Firefit UK
Lead agency: Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MF&RS) and Fire Support Network (FSN)
Area: Merseyside
Website:

Project brief: The Firefit UK programme involves fire fighters and volunteers using their unique role in society to lead and engage communities through a variety of sporting and cultural initiatives targeted at those people least likely to be involved in such activities. These typically include sports such as: athletics; basketball; boxing; cricket; football; wheelchair handball; tennis; dodge ball; rugby; tug of war; and the fire fighter challenge. The three key cultural initiatives focus on music, reading and creative innovation. This list is by no means definitive. Firefit UK, being an umbrella brand for activities that get people more active, is developed in partnership with local communities.

The sports are mainly delivered to young people through Street Cages (mobile multi-sport outdoor arenas that are set up in communities with the greatest needs). Firefit UK's three key cultural initiatives are delivered at 26 community fire stations.

MF&RS delivered the World Fire Fighter Games 2008. It is an 'Olympic Games' for fire fighters and attracted over 3000 competitors from over 70 countries around the world. MF&RS decided to link Firefit UK's reputation for being fit and strong enough to carry out the rescue part of the role, to helping inspire a generation to become fitter and stronger, eat healthier and get active in building community cohesion through cultural activities. The 2012 Olympic legacy goals fit perfectly with MF&RS.

Who will have the greatest long-term impact on the community? Elite runners, boxers and swimmers who become heroes or the community's everyday heroes (fire fighters) who simply run, box or swim for the love of their sport and what it brings to their lives. Firefit UK's programme is about encouraging increased participation and physical activity among people, particularly those facing the most challenges whether they are societal, physical or mental. They are about competing and trying something new. They are also about reducing anti-social behaviour and encouraging young people to become coaches and volunteers within their own communities, so encouraging social cohesion in the process. The cultural aspects of the Firefit UK programme are about inspiring young people to develop and explore their potential through music and literacy. It challenges them to think innovatively when it comes to other creative arts to build stronger, more cohesive communities. The fire fighters who deliver, and will deliver the future programmes are inspired to become Firefit UK Olympians, being inspired by the association with the Olympics to play their part in inspiring a generation.

