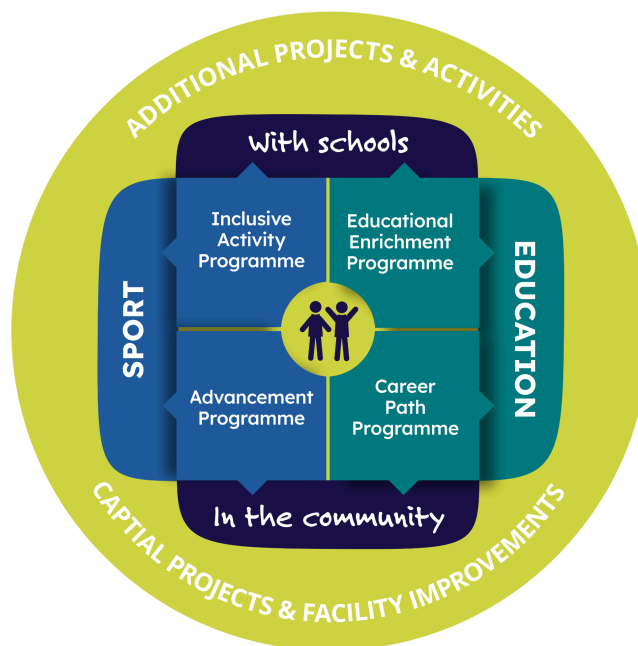


# Creating Opportunities for Children and Young People with SEND and from Low-Income Backgrounds



One Life, Many Opportunities

[henmanfoundation.org](https://henmanfoundation.org)



Registered Charity Number 1161964



@TimHenmanFDN

## Introduction

The Tim Henman Foundation (THF) is a youth charity that creates opportunities that support and inspire children and young people to reach their potential. The children and young people (CYP) supported by THF have SEND and/or are from low-income backgrounds.

THF works with coaches, teachers and mentors to deliver its sports and education programmes.

## Understanding the Challenge

Children and Young People with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) may require additional support to access areas where they experience barriers. THF's programmes provide inclusive environments, adapted coaching or teaching approaches and appropriate support which can help ensure that CYP with SEND are able to participate, develop skills and access progression pathways in education, sport and future prospects.

SEND encompasses a broad range of needs with the Department for Education grouping SEND into four main areas:



- **Communication and Interaction:** conditions that affect communication and social interaction, including autism spectrum conditions and speech, language and communication needs.
- **Cognition and learning:** difficulties with learning, processing information, or acquiring academic skills. This includes specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.
- **Social, emotional and mental health:** Needs relating to emotional regulation, behaviour or mental health which can affect engagement with education and activities.
- **Sensory and/or physical needs:** Conditions affecting physical ability or sensory processing, including visual impairments, hearing impairments and physical disabilities.

As of June 2025, over 1.7 million pupils in England were identified as having SEND, with 482,640 of those having an EHCP. The number of CYP with SEND has risen by 5.6% in the last year alone, putting a huge strain on resources within the education system. It costs an average of £7k per annum to educate a pupil in a mainstream school. This rises to £13k per annum for a child with

SEND and to £20k-£25k for pupils with an EHCP who require more specialist support. In special schools, the average cost of educating a pupil is £40k per annum with independent school placements between £60k-£100k depending on the level of specialist provision required.

Some CYP may require more significant support through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which provides a statutory assessment of needs and outlines the additional support required.

Alongside these additional needs, many children and young people also experience financial disadvantage, which can further limit access to opportunities and support.



Across the UK, a significant proportion of CYP are growing up in households experiencing financial disadvantage. As of March 2024, an estimated 3.4 million children in the UK (around 30% of all children) were living in relative poverty. In January 2025, 2.17 million children were eligible for Free School Meals although it is widely believed this figure may underestimate the true number of children from low-income households as some eligible families do not register due to stigma, lack of awareness or

administrative barriers. Rates of financial disadvantage also vary geographically and areas with higher levels of deprivation typically have higher proportions of CYP from low-income backgrounds, reflecting wider socioeconomic inequalities between communities.

Understanding this broader national context helps ensure that THF's programmes are designed to reach CYP who may face barriers to participation, development and progression.

## **Barriers Faced by Children and Young People**

THF has identified several key challenges and barriers faced by CYP from low-income backgrounds and with SEND.

Access to activities, resources and opportunities is more limited compared to those enjoyed by CYP from higher income backgrounds. As a result of these limitations, CYP have a reduced

exposure to networks and progression pathways resulting in a negative impact on their confidence and aspirations.

For children and young people with SEND, additional barriers may exist where activities are not adapted or inclusive, requiring additional support to enable participation.

Understanding this broader national context of the additional requirements for educating CYP with SEND helps ensure that programmes are designed to provide inclusive opportunities and appropriate support.

For those experiencing both SEND and financial disadvantage, these challenges are often compounded, further limiting access to opportunities, reducing participation and impacting confidence, development and long-term outcomes.

### **THF Response: Targeted Programmes**

THF works in areas of high deprivation, focusing on schools with higher than average FSM rates and high SEND levels. Our approach is a place-based one where we form partnerships with schools, community based organisations, coaches, teachers and mentors.

When supporting children and young people in community settings, THF works with delivery partners to identify those most in need. Partners are asked to recommend and refer CYP who have SEND and/or are from low-income backgrounds, with declarations of these criteria provided by parents or guardians where appropriate.

When assessing a new programme for CYP from low-income backgrounds, we will look at a school's levels of Free School Meals (FSM) focusing on those with levels above the national average of 25.7% (as at 7 July 2025). Other criteria we consider are the deprivation levels at both Local Authority level and LSOA (lower layer super output areas) level, with the latter giving much more targeted information on a particular area's levels of deprivation. The UK Government's statistics on these levels was updated in October 2025. Relative poverty levels are also taken into account to provide contextual understanding of income levels, with low-income classed as £22,000-£36,000 household income per annum and relative poverty at below £22,000. Child poverty levels in each



Local Authority are also considered, but THF acknowledges that as there are pockets of higher and lower deprivation in many boroughs, these figures are more unreliable.

THF delivers its sports and education programmes as follows:

### **Inclusive Activity Programme (sport)**

Provides access to regular activity and further opportunities so children can experience the benefits of sport. The programme delivers regular coaching in-school, community activities, equipment, mentoring workshops, inclusive sports days and teacher/coach training and qualifications. Students from low-income backgrounds are 11% less likely and SEND students 23% less likely than their peers to participate in sport.

### **Advancement Programme (sport)**

Provides support for talented young athletes who deserve the chance but lack the resources. This provides coaching/training fees, membership subscriptions, equipment costs, funding to access qualifications and travel expenses. For young aspiring athletes, 62% struggle to pay the fees to continue, often leading to dropout.

### **Educational Enrichment Programme (education)**

Provides extra tuition in core subjects leading to enrichment activities, together with teaching resources and mentoring. Since 2020, the attainment gap has increased and is measurable from early years (4.6 months) to 19.2 months after GCSEs.

### **Career Path Programme (education)**

Provides vocational qualifications, paid work experience, mentoring support and resources. 872,000 young people aged 16–24 are NEET, with many citing lack of skills as a key barrier.

## **Difference Made**

The Inclusive Activity Programme has helped improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of CYP taking part and has enabled teachers and coaches to upskill and gain qualifications of their own. One of the teachers at a partner school has noted that the programme has provided *“a wonderful opportunity for our pupils to learn a variety of skills that can benefit their life outside school and enhance their time at school.”*

The Educational Enrichment Programme, relaunched in 2025, has shown that CYP taking part have improved their attainment in core subjects and benefited from increased exposure to extra-curricular activities. One teacher noted that the programme was *“engaging reluctant writers,*

*builds independence and helps children see themselves as capable learners” with another noting that “this increased participation represents an important step in the pupils’ academic and emotional development and indicates promising momentum for continued progress.”*

The Advancement Programme has increased support for talented young athletes so that they can pursue their sporting aspirations, with one saying that *“the support makes a huge difference to my confidence as well as my athletic development because having support eases financial pressure and allows athletes like myself thrive in the sport I love.”* Many now see a career in sport as a viable option in the future, with one noting that *“the programme has helped me appreciate the wider support network in sport.”*

The Career Path Programme has increased employability and future prospects for many young people with participants noting their more positive mindsets, increase in confidence and motivation and capability of learning new skills. One tutor noted that *“if our young people can grow, so can others.”*

## **Conclusion**

THF believes that creating opportunities that support and inspire children and young people to reach their potential is ever more vital in our changing world. By supporting CYP in low-income backgrounds and with SEND via our sports and education programmes, we are playing a role in helping to improve the day-to-day lives of CYP and their future life chances and success.

Our founder Tim Henman launched the charity because he understands the power of sport and the difference a good education can make. Over the past 10 years THF has supported 91,000 CYP and we thank our supporters, partners, coaches, teachers and mentors who share our mission and continue to work together with us to transform lives.

