

FRESH IDEAS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Changemakers in Sport Hackathons
Cardiff Met and Wrexham University
October 2025



Dechrau Rhywbeth Da Start Something Good



Tîm Cymru
Team Wales



Cardiff
Metropolitan
University

Prifysgol
Metropolitan
Caerdydd

Prifysgol Wrexham
Wrexham University

Changemakers in Sport Social Hackathons

In collaboration with university partners and Tîm Cymru, two Changemakers in Sport Social Hackathons took place in October 2025 to develop fresh ideas for more empathy and gender equality and accessibility in sport. The events were part of a series of three hackathons organised by Ashoka and delivered in partnership with the Start Something Good© team at Cwmpas, funded by the Welsh Government's EURO 2025 Partner Support Fund.

The Empathy in Sport Changemaker Social Hackathon took place at Cardiff Metropolitan University on Monday 20th October and the Gender Equality and Accessibility in Sport Social Hackathon took place at Wrexham University on Tuesday 21st October.

This report will capture the insights and ideas of participants from both events in chronological order.

The Start Something Good© Social Hackathon Process

"It was all about energy, collaboration, and building on our strengths."

How the hackathons worked

The hackathons were intergenerational, bringing together young people, lecturers, former players, people from sports organisations, and others with an interest in empathy in sport.

Divided into mixed teams the participants were guided through a series of short workshops to identify their strengths and assets to help address the challenges around empathy (Cardiff Met) and Gender Equality and Accessibility (Wrexham University).

From this foundation they looked at the challenges facing us now, what an awesome future could look like, and how we can get there.

The next step was to develop ideas to better embed empathy in sport. In total the teams came up with over 350 ideas.

Each team then worked to refine their ideas, selecting the three best ones, and finally getting down to the one big idea they all thought would work best.

Finally, each team pitched their ideas for feedback. There was a real buzz in the room, with so many good ideas fitting together.

The Workshops

The teams were taken through several different workshops throughout the session:

- Asset Mapping to identify strengths
- Understanding the challenge
- Imaging a better future and how to get there
- Developing their ideas
- Prototyping and storyboarding their idea
- Pitching to the whole room for feedback



Social Hackathon 1: Empathy in Sport (Cardiff Met)

The hackathon focused on the Challenge Question:

“How might we better embed empathy throughout sport?”

The Results

What did we learn?

Each of the ideas pitched on the day highlights the big themes that people care about. Not only are these themes important, but they point forward to how we can dream big and explore a better future.

Thirty-three participants took part in six mixed teams, with young people, lecturers, support organisations, club officials, volunteers, ex-players, and administrators taking part.

Between them they generated over 250 ideas.

Ten Big Challenges to Empathy in Sport

1. Fan behaviour
2. Organisational policies – code of conduct
3. Participation v performance
4. Competing to win v process
5. Cultural differences
6. Lack of investment and funding
7. Lack of education
8. Decision makers and boards
9. Self-empathy and belief
10. Tradition

Six Signs of an Awesome Future for Empathy in Sport

1. No barriers – cost, facilities, understanding, education
2. Sense of community, supportive, positive feedback, and environment
3. Equal opportunities at all levels and a diversity of experiences
4. Depth and meaning to empathy among coaches, players, and parents
5. Education in soft skills
6. Co-design and participatory budgeting

Seven Areas for Action for more Empathy in Sport

1. Education – curriculum change and across the system
2. Training – in emotional intelligence and empathy for decision makers, funders, and administrators
3. Leadership and governance – with iterative ability to bring insights and board representation that is inclusive and intergenerational
4. Funding and investment – including participatory budgeting
5. Multi-purpose facilities that are accessible
6. Influence – the importance of role models, campaigns, policy, and lobbying
7. Zero tolerance



The Pitches



Each team was given one minute to present their 'elevator pitch,' and one minute to deliver the 'Sarick effect' pitch. The first person pitched the positives of the idea and why they believed it would work. The second pitcher identified what barriers needed to be overcome and asked who in the room and beyond could help to overcome those barriers.

Team 1: Wristbands for Empathy

A movement similar to "Take the Knee," with players showing solidarity through empathy bands and shared messaging across sports. The big challenge identified was securing buy-in from elite athletes and coordinating across different sporting bodies.

Team 2: Empathy Cards for Children

Colour-coded cards to help young players express how they feel during training or games. Participants highlighted the risk of stigma, competitiveness, or reluctance to use the cards unless coaches normalise it.

Team 3: "CrowdSound" App

A personalised digital hub for empathy: videos, stories, advice, and a "Netflix-style" dashboard making it unique to each user. The key barrier was reaching beyond the usual audience and making sure those who need it most actually find and use it.

Team 4: Empathy Training, From Grassroots to Professionals

Mandatory empathy training for everyone involved in sport: players, parents, and coaches.

Ideas included interactive online modules and a shared empathy pledge at all clubs. Concerns included safeguarding, delivery capacity, digital access, and funding.

Team 5: Physical Education Five Days a Week

Embedding empathy through daily PE in schools, with teachers trained in empathy-led approaches and participation at the centre. Barriers noted included teacher capacity, timetable pressures, and parental concerns about academic balance.

Team 6: Immersive Empathy Events

A national event using storytelling, VR headsets and lived-experience content to help young people understand different perspectives. Participants stressed the importance of helping children not just “hear and see,” but feel moved to act.

Overall, the hackathon showed strong appetite for practical, scalable ideas that can be embedded across sports, from grassroots clubs to professional environments. The common thread across all tables was clear - empathy is a skill we can teach, normalise, and celebrate, and sport has a powerful platform to lead this change.



Social Hackathon 2: Gender Equality and Accessibility in Sport (Wrexham University)

The hackathon focused on the Challenge Question:

“How can we expand existing opportunities for girls and reimagine what truly gender-equitable spaces look like?”

Fifteen participants took part in two mixed teams, with young people, lecturers, support organisations, club officials, volunteers, and university enterprise staff taking part.

Between them they generated over one hundred ideas.

Six Big Challenges

The teams identified the following challenges to expanding opportunities and creating gender-equitable spaces:

1. Outdated and archaic venues
2. Lack of access due to high demand
3. Lack of kit
4. Low uptake of interest from female students
5. Poor physical layout of showers and changing facilities
6. Men’s competitive teams prioritised over women’s development

Ten Signs of an Awesome Future

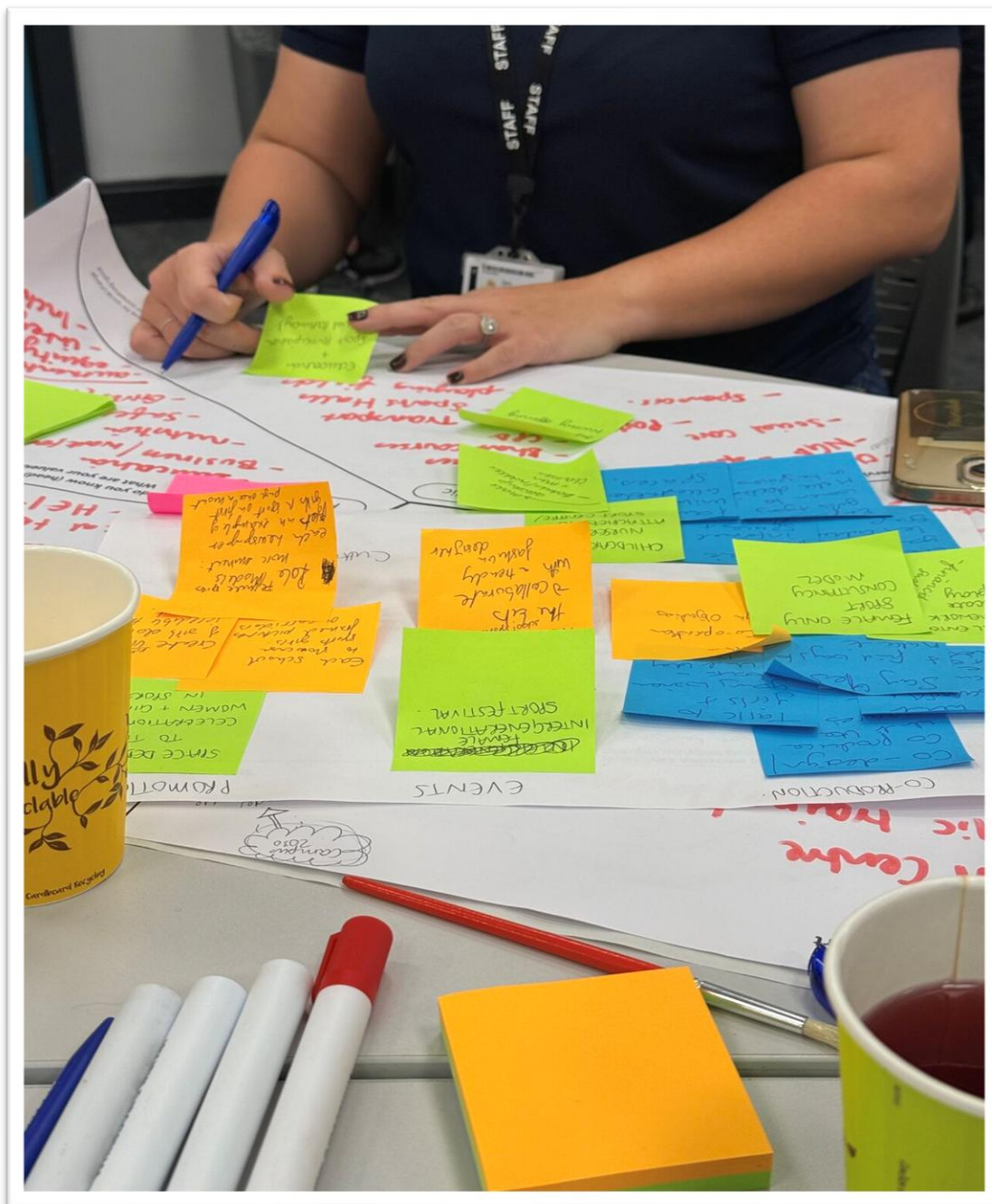
What does an awesome future look like with expanding opportunities and gender-equitable spaces:

1. Equal access for those in areas of deprivation
2. Free or low-cost access
3. A sense of safety, from physical layout to culture in clubs and venues
4. A space where all girls and women are welcome and able to express their authentic selves
5. Play throughout childhood to adulthood
6. Dual pathways and professional contracts
7. Care about participation in sport
8. More volunteers and better facilities
9. Social enterprise models
10. Encouraging choice

Six Agreed Areas for Action

The teams came up with the following steps to address the challenge of expanding opportunities and creating gender-equitable spaces:

1. The need to link with education
2. Ensuring that facilities and culture are where girls want to be
3. More collaboration across sectors to make these changes happen
4. Finding more resources to support organisations
5. Nurturing a positive culture
6. Creating safe spaces where people can be vulnerable, issues made known, support is given, improvements made, and resolutions are worked towards



The Pitches

Each team was given one minute to present their 'elevator pitch,' and one minute to deliver the 'Sarick effect' pitch. The first person pitched the positives of the idea and why they believed it would work. The second pitcher identified what barriers needed to be overcome and asked who in the room and beyond could help to overcome those barriers.

Team 1: Clubs supporting players with game time childcare

To support more women with children to regain their identity and play support we could attach to every club a nursery/childcare provision. There would be benefits here to mothers and children, with children being able to see mums playing sport and being part of a club. One approach here to overcome challenges would be for a club accreditation system to incorporate this into normal practice as a mainstream club initiative. A version of this idea has been tried at a rugby club for men looking after children because their partners are on military service. This idea could also take into consideration the needs of young carers.

Team 2: A resource to help women and girls find their "Why"

This idea is addressing the problem of participation as women and girls get older. The solution is to help them find their "Why" through the creation of digital or physical resources. This would help build confidence, belonging, and participation. We recognise we often make assumptions about involvement, and do not always see the link up between finding purpose on and off the pitch. There could be a link here to the Schools Sports Survey. We need to be asking the right questions and collecting the right data to understand this better. There is a need for partners to collaborate on this. The funding aspect needs to be addressed to build the right software.

What were the key takeaways?

In summary these are the key takeaways from those who took part in the two hackathons:

"We should celebrate the progress already made but acknowledge that a lot more action and change is needed."

"Safety and perception of 'safe' is an issue."

"Depth in diversity is needed – we are still operating on the fact that all women and girls will want this because it is better than before."

"More 1-2-1 conversations on needs and wants must happen, and more empathy."

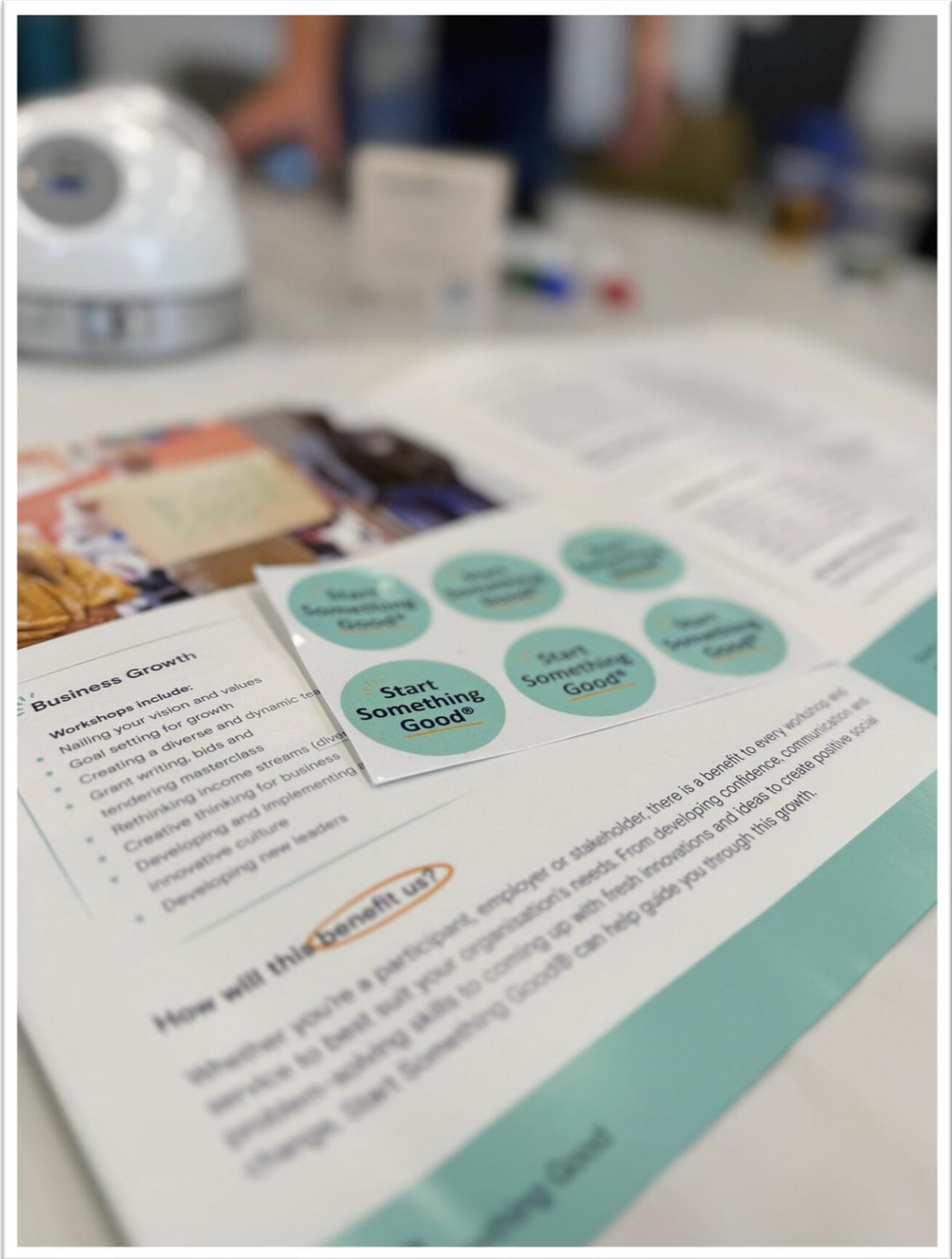
"It's important that different voices are being heard but also acted on."

"Do we need a campaign to put yourself in someone else's boots?"

"When it comes to funding to support better access are there some eligibility issues for schools and universities?"

"Our data collection system on this is a problem. Is the system broken?"

"Our systems often make big assumptions about what is wanted and needed."



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