



YOUTH FOCUSED **TRANSPARENCY** **ADAPTABLE** **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

BLACK HISTORY

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **RACE & ETHNICITY**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **BAME / ALL**
AGE SUTABILITY: **6 - 18** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE)

Paul fought hard against the odds and was the first ever black first-team player for Chelsea, making his debut in 1982. He led the way for future black players at Chelsea and other clubs by never giving up and inspiring others. He is rightly considered by the football community as a pioneer.

FULFILLING AMBITION

POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **BAME / ALL / DISADVANTAGED / YOUTH GROUPS & FOOTBALL ACADEMIES**
AGE SUTABILITY: **10 - 18** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE)

Since he could run, all Paul ever wanted to do was be a professional footballer. He worked hard, practising whenever he could, and escaped his challenging upbringing and environment - signing his first pro contract with Chelsea in 1981. He played 103 times for Chelsea and also played 21 times for Reading Football Club.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **RELIGION**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **FAITH SCHOOLS**
AGE SUTABILITY: **6 - 16** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE)

Paul believes in God and places great emphasis on the power of prayer. He cites his childhood priest in Southall in the 1970s as one of the first good male influences in his life.

ADDICTION

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **DRUG ADDICTION; PRISON**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS; THOSE IN AND IDENTIFIED AS AT RISK OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM; THOSE IN AND IDENTIFIED AS AT RISK OF DRUG ABUSE; YOUTH CLUBS**
AGE SUTABILITY: **13 - 25** (CAN BE TAILORED TO OLDER AGES; PRISONS; THOSE WORKING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SECTOR; THOSE WORKING IN DRUG ADDICTION PROGRAMMES)

Once football had ceased to be an option, music took more prominence in Paul's life. He became a DJ in East London in 1988. Drugs were commonplace in the music scene during this time and in 1991, Paul was tricked into smoking crack for the first time during a party (he was told it was marijuana). This marked the start of Paul's drug addiction during his late 20s. "The crack helped me suppress such painful thoughts and conflicts in my life. I could forget all my problems. After a few years of using it more and more, in 1995 I felt like I was on it every minute. I was skint and looking for money to feed the habit. And that's when the problems really started. My nature had changed. Crack makes you do bad things and tell lies. But I couldn't stop". Friends intervened and took charge of Paul's life, encouraging him to get back to fitness, detoxify and rehabilitate in a residential home and rehabilitation units. "It wasn't easy keeping straight. A hell of a lot of battles loomed ahead". Paul successfully recovered, after relapsing in the late 1990s and being made homeless.

PRISON

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **PRISON**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS; THOSE IN AND IDENTIFIED AS AT RISK OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM; YOUTH CLUBS**
AGE SUTABILITY: **14 - 25** (CAN BE TAILORED TO OLDER AGES; PRISONS; THOSE WORKING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SECTOR)

"Don't let people tell you they're soft on young offenders. Borstal instilled more discipline into me and deterred me from a serious life of crime. It was being cut off that I couldn't stand... away from my new daughter, family and friends... but most of all I hated being deprived of my personal freedom". Paul knows from his own lived experience the importance of supporting those coming out of the criminal justice system.

PAUL CANOVILLE FOUNDATION

POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **SPORTS ACADEMIES; MEMBERS OF SPORTS CLUBS; YOUTH CLUBS; SCHOOLS**
AGE SUTABILITY: **10 - 25** (CAN BE TAILORED TO THOSE WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE)

Paul founded the Paul Canoville Foundation in 2015. He works with schools and youths to educate and promote resilience. He relates in a personal way to get through to children, telling his story and advising them not to make the same mistakes he did. In 2020, Chelsea Football Club renamed their largest suite in honour of Paul and his place in the club's history as Chelsea's first black player.

ANTI-RACISM

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **RACE & ETHNICITY**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **BAME / ALL**
AGE SUTABILITY: **6 - 18** (CAN BE TAILORED TO OLDER AGES)

Paul endured constant racism from prejudiced fans - even his own supporters sung vile songs and threw bananas at him. Paul never gave up, educating and eventually winning over fans by becoming a match-winning hero and icon against racism.

MAKING IT IN FOOTBALL

POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **BAME / ALL / DISADVANTAGED / YOUTH GROUPS & FOOTBALL ACADEMIES**
AGE SUTABILITY: **6 - 18** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE)

Paul passionately believes in the value of structure and discipline that comes from football training and practice. At many stages in his life when he was experiencing difficulties, it was football that offered him a way out. Commitment to working hard to get better, combined with pragmatic advice about completing education and not putting all your eggs into one basket, are frequent themes whenever Paul talks to youth and community groups.

THE POWER OF SPORT

POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **BAME / ALL / DISADVANTAGED / YOUTH GROUPS & FOOTBALL ACADEMIES**
AGE SUTABILITY: **8 - 18** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE)

Paul was heading down a troubled path and getting into trouble at school. His PE teachers saw this and encouraged him to go to the gymnasium at lunchtime where he could play all sorts of sports. They coached him on the technical side and he became hooked on football. It's all he ever talked about from 1977 onward (when he was 14). He wasn't going to let anything stop him making it as a professional footballer. His mother supported this as it kept Paul out of trouble - all he wanted to do was go to football practice (although he was a gifted cricketer too). Paul started playing in school teams, then under-18 teams at the weekend and worked his way up.

ASKING FOR HELP / MENTORSHIP

POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **ALL**
AGE SUTABILITY: **14 - 25** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE; THOSE IN HOMELESS SHELTERS; PRISONS; THOSE WORKING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SECTOR)

Paul's most successful season was in 1984/5 - when his profile was at its highest. He was offered a new contract at Chelsea, but negotiated it himself without seeking professional advice or even consulting with other players regarding their own deals. As a result, he did not ask for bonuses for goals, cup runs and other add-ons to be included, like many other players did. "I should have been more organised, but I wasn't".

PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER FOOTBALL

POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **SPORTS ACADEMIES; MEMBERS OF SPORTS CLUBS**
AGE SUTABILITY: **15 - 25** (CAN BE TAILORED TO OLDER AGES)

Paul suffered the latest in a recurring run of knee injuries in November 1987 and was forced to retire. He had nothing to fall back on, and had not arranged insurance cover to protect himself. "I was left with nothing to show for my professional football career, the victim of my own bad planning".

MAKING A DIFFERENCE / FRESH START

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **DRUG ABUSE; PRISON; CANCER; HOMELESSNESS**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS; THOSE IN AND IDENTIFIED AS AT RISK OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM; THOSE IN AND IDENTIFIED AS AT RISK OF DRUG ABUSE; YOUTH CLUBS**
AGE SUTABILITY: **13 - 25** (CAN BE TAILORED TO OLDER AGES; PRISONS; THOSE WORKING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SECTOR; THOSE WORKING IN DRUG ADDICTION PROGRAMMES)

After beating cancer again, Paul threw himself into voluntary work with youngsters. "After the things I'd put myself through, I was in a great position to warn young people how not to live their lives. I hope I can help them make better choices than I did". Paul was invited back to Chelsea FC in 2005 when the club was celebrating its Centenary Year and eventually became part of their "Legends" as the club began to release Paul's value and place in their history.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **RACE AND ETHNICITY; DRUG ADDICTION; PRISON; HOMELESSNESS; MENTAL HEALTH**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **BAME / ALL/DISADVANTAGED**
AGE SUTABILITY: **10 - 18** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE)

Paul has repeatedly overcome adversity throughout his life: a shattered and bleak childhood, racism on and off the football pitch, drug addiction, time in prison, his baby son dying in his arms, homelessness, mental health issues and two bouts of life-threatening cancer. He kept getting back up; he kept fighting.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **RACE & ETHNICITY**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **BAME / ALL / DISADVANTAGED / YOUTH GROUPS & FOOTBALL ACADEMIES**
AGE SUTABILITY: **10 - 18** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE)

Paul was born in Southall, London in 1962 to a working-class migrant family. His mother emigrated to England from Anguilla and his father had from Dominica. His mother raised him and his sister June alone, as his father had no interest in raising a family. Paul fell into the wrong crowd (as a teenager he played truant from school and was sent to prison for petty crime), but ultimately found positive role models in the form of PE Coaches and footballers. The rest is history.

MAKING MISTAKES (& LEARNING FROM THEM)

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **PRISON; DRUG ADDICTION; PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS; THOSE IN AND IDENTIFIED AS AT RISK OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM; YOUTH CLUBS**
AGE SUTABILITY: **10 - 25** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE)

Paul was regularly and persistently truant from school, and eventually asked to leave as he would not be eligible to sit any exams. He soon learned he was about to become a father and, needing money, he resorted to theft and burglary. He was sent to prison when he was 17. It really shook him up and he realised he had to "knuckle down and get real" when he was released a short while later. There was however a prison football team which he played for. One of the prison guards - seeing how talented Paul was - said: "when you are out, you should go for a trial at Chelsea". His words stuck with Paul.

RECOVERY FROM CANCER

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **CANCER; DRUG ABUSE**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **THOSE DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER (AND FAMILIES THEREOF)**
AGE SUTABILITY: **16 - 25** (CAN BE TAILORED TO OLDER AGES)

Paul was diagnosed with lymphoma in the late 1990s. Doctors successfully operated, but then subsequently discovered he had non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Paul was told that he previous recreational drug use had likely contributed to his condition. Paul was operated on again and then endure painful chemotherapy. He moved back in with his mother, and went through radiotherapy until his cancer was eventually in remission. It had taken two years of his life before he was back on his feet again and able to work, although cancer returned again in 2004 when Paul again completed chemotherapy and other painful treatment.

HOMELESSNESS

SENSITIVE TOPICS COVERED: **HOMELESSNESS**
POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: **THOSE IN RECEIPT OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND/OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS; YOUTH CLUBS**
AGE SUTABILITY: **14 - 25** (CAN BE TAILORED TO ANY AGE; THOSE IN HOMELESS SHELTERS; PRISONS; THOSE WORKING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SECTOR)

From the age of 18 onwards, Paul regularly lived rough on the street, in homes for the homeless or abandoned cars. All of this gave Paul a different perspective on life, and massive sympathy for those who society leaves behind. He knows what it is like to have nothing and nobody to help turn your life around. He continued to play football whenever he could however, prioritising training and matches with semi-professional teams such as Hillingdon Borough. It was at Hillingdon that his youth coach immediately spotted Paul's natural ability and speed, suggesting Paul play on the left wing rather than as a defender. Paul excelled in this position, which is where he ultimately found success at Chelsea FC. Hillingdon also gave his life much needed structure and a stabilising influence, although he still regularly received racist abuse from players and football fans. Chelsea expressed an interest after seeing Paul's performances and invited him to a week's trial, before John Neal the Chelsea manager signing him for the remainder of the season in December 1981. Paul joined a squad of big-name players including Clive Walker, Micky Droy and Graham Wilkins.



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BOOK A TALK