

The Christmas Truce Challenge 2025

Remembering football played in no man's land in 1914, and marking 80 years since World War Two



Christmas Truce Challenge Impact Report 2025



Project Overview

For the ninth consecutive year, Big Ideas delivered the Christmas Truce Education Challenge on behalf of the Education team at the Premier League.

Every year, the Premier League holds a football tournament in Ypres, Belgium in December to mark the Christmas Truce Football Match, which took place on Christmas Day in 1914. Soldiers laid down their weapons and met in no man's land where they engaged in extraordinary activities including exchanging gifts, giving each other haircuts and playing games of football.

The Premier League takes eight U12 Academy Teams to Belgium; five of whom qualify through football and three through the Truce Education Challenge. While in Ypres the players not only play football with European Teams but also visit World War One battlefields, monuments, war graves and take part in memorial services and celebrations.



Project Delivery

In 2025, players were invited to remember football played in no man's land in 1914, and mark 80 years since World War Two. In total, 26 Clubs took part in the education challenge each receiving a digital workshop with Big Ideas. The Clubs then went on to complete three challenges in the spirit of the Christmas Truce, celebrating friendship, unity and placing the Clubs at the heart of each of their communities. This year the challenges were:

- **Discover** club stories from World War One and World War Two
 - Research one player from your Club who fought in World War One and World War Two.
 - Find a special way to link and share their stories
- **Remember** and commemorate these people in a creative way
- **Engage** with local veterans in your community through player-led social action

Each of the three challenges invited players to showcase skills outside of the world of football. Researching, presenting, teamwork and communication skills are all developed through this programme, fostering a holistic approach to education. The Challenge is an opportunity for players to develop vital skills that are essential both in and outside a future career in football.

This year the winners of the Education Challenge, selected by the Premier League, were:

- **Aston Villa F.C.**
- **Brighton and Hove Albion F.C.**
- **Manchester United F.C.**



Project Impact

Club entries are hugely varied each year, with outstanding submissions submitted by Clubs across the country. This year outstanding examples of projects include:

- Fundraising for Comrades Coffee Mornings - the vital donations have meant that this group can continue to meet for the next 6 months
- Memorial services hosted by players - where family descendants of the veteran-players were present to hear poems and tributes
- An advent calendar with each door revealing player research about footballer-veterans who fought in the world wars
- Original poetry and songs created as part of the programme
- Memorial trees planted

The feedback from the communities on player-led work has been outstanding. Local veterans and family members highlight the positive impact of the programme:



“Thank you for arranging such an interesting and rewarding week for me. It was an honour to be part of the team that met the young lads on Wednesday and to be on the pitch with you all.”

Participating Veteran with A.F.C Bournemouth

“Respectful kids who were willing to listen and learn about our time serving our country. They should all be very proud of themselves along with all the staff involved... Made to feel very welcome by all involved.”

Participating Veteran with Manchester City F.C.

“Thank you very much to the Academy Students at Burnley F.C. for creating these wonderful poems! I’m Gordon’s son, Nigel, and my wife Janet and I were delighted that Dad had been researched and given such a wonderful tribute.”

Descendant of player commemorated by Burnley F.C.

Celebration and Legacy Materials

Big Ideas produce celebratory banners, legacy books and a celebration film each year to profile the Christmas Truce Challenge competition entries and celebrate all Clubs that have taken part.

Each of these three items is carefully curated by Big Ideas to draw the very best out of competition submissions and celebrate the hard work of the U12 players and their Academies. The banners are showcased in Ypres as part of the Christmas Truce Tournament, the film is shared on social media, and the legacy books are posted to each Club so that each player can keep a copy.

The celebratory materials are a valuable part of the programme, recognising the contributions of all participants.



Workshop and Project Feedback

Following the online workshop, all participating Clubs were sent an online survey to complete and the following insights were gathered:

100% of Clubs reported that their players enjoyed or really enjoyed the digital workshop with Big Ideas

93% of Clubs said their players were engaged or very engaged in the session.

Clubs mentioned the workshop 'exceeded expectations', noting how the players 'were engaged and listened really well' and the content was 'engaging, fun and informative for all involved'. The Heads of Education at Academy Clubs provided the following feedback:

**Thank you, the boys are now very excited about the project.
It was a great introduction!**

It was overall a very good workshop for the boys.

The groups continue to enjoy these projects. Thank you!

[The players] have thoroughly enjoyed every experience that it has brought so we'd like to say a big thank you for giving us the opportunity again.

Thank you for your support through this process.

Thanks for running the project this year, already looking forward to next year. The boys have really enjoyed it too.

The boys have loved taking part in the missions!

We have loved taking part in the project and the boys will have some lasting memories.

Big Ideas is proud to partner with the education team at the Premier League to deliver this engaging and enriching education programme.

