

## CASE STUDY: Stoke Challenge

The project combines active sports sessions with classroom-based activities within the setting of Stoke City Football Club. It aims to help young people who are not in education, training or employment (NEET) to develop communication and team-working skills, practical job seeking skills and employability skills in order to help them find employment or access further learning.

The project runs two 10-week programmes on two days each week in parallel at any one time (Group 1: Monday & Tuesday; Group 2: Thursday & Friday) – each programme starts with 25 young people. Project participants are usually aged 16-19 and many of them fall within the ‘hardest to help’ NEET category.

Project activities are delivered by two full-time project workers and two full-time coaching staff, with the help of other casual staff and volunteers as well as the project manager. Participants are picked up by mini-bus at about 8:30 in the morning and delivered to Stoke City Football Club for about 9:15. Each day starts with a one hour sport session aimed at developing team-working skills (American football, baseball, badminton, team building activities, etc.). This is followed by a coffee break and then classroom-based group work focused on job seeking skills or more general employability skills. Lunch – provided by the project – starts at 12:00. The afternoon activities follow the same format as the morning, combining sports-based and classroom-based activities, ending at about 3pm. In addition, the project sometimes offers activities such as a ‘midnight walk’ or a fitness session in a local gym outside the normal project times.

Interviews with young people who had participated in the project said that the team-work activities helped to develop their social skills and improved their confidence.

*‘It’s got my confidence up with talking to people I don’t know – meeting new people. So when I went on the college course I wasn’t as shy as I used to be – I talked up front to people’. (Female, 17)*

Others commented on the way it had also helped them find employment or develop their job searching skills:

*‘I enjoyed coming here, but it was helping me as well. I needed a CV doing and help with interviews – they recorded you having one and then showed yourself how you did, how you look in an interview. And it really helped me out – I’ve been in a couple of interviews after that and it made a difference’. (Male, 17)*

Between January 2007 and April 2009, 226 young people started on the programme and of these 68 per cent went onto a positive outcome, most often either a college course or a job with training.

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