

## street games case study



### Report Subject: **Case Study**

### Title: **Leasowe Lads Positive Futures Group, Wirral**



### Background

Wirral Positive Futures (managed by Wirral Sports Development Unit) engages with young people that have offended, are at risk of offending or have issues with substance misuse including alcohol and solvents, through funding provided by a range of partners, including: Wallasey Constituency funding, StreetGames and Sport England.

Once young people have been referred by key agencies, Positive Futures engages with them in order to mentor them into a range of activities; with the aim of improving their behaviour, attitudes and outlook on life.

The social inclusion programme uses sport as its main method of engagement, with Wirral Sports Development Unit delivering five Doorstep Sport Clubs, StreetGames Young Volunteer programme (SYV) and the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme.



### Leasowe Lads Positive Futures Group

This case study provides information about a group of males aged between 14-21 years from the Leasowe estate that were referred into the Positive Futures scheme in order to engage in positive activities and attempt to steer away from nuisance or negative behaviour.

The group were known to the Police and the Anti-Social behaviour team, with individuals having either offended or being at risk of offending, plus there were also issues



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related to substance misuse, with Cannabis having a negative impact on some of the individual's within this group.

The group, just by their very nature looked intimidating to local residents; even more so after they had been drinking. Their behaviour was becoming a big problem, particularly around the shops and Leisure Centre on the Leasowe estate.

The shops and community centre on Twickenham Drive were affected due to the threat of this group 'just being there' and local residents were having to put up with constant barracking, nuisance and anti-social behaviour due to the groups binge drinking and there were also some issues with substance misuse (Cannabis).

At the start of the process the group wasn't particularly receptive or keen to change, but Positive Futures managed

to gain a common ground in methods of engagement and we were able to engage and persuade the 'core' group of the lads and introduce them into the fitness suite in Leasowe Leisure Centre.

Although the core group were engaging positively in fitness activities, this initially, resulted in some problems at the Centre, with the rest of their 'mates' coming into the Centre and whilst they were waiting for the core group to finish their workout, they would be verbally abusive to the reception staff and public, intimidating centre users and being a general nuisance.

A crucial milestone in this piece of work was a successful funding bid from the Wallasey Constituency of £500 which was matched funded through the StreetGames Doorstep Club programme. This additional funding enabled Positive Futures to access the indoor sports hall five a side pitches as a regular booking which made the 'offer' more attractive to the rest of the group as a whole and meant



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that a more appealing programme could be delivered for the young people.

In order to engage as many of the group as possible, the Positive Futures Team further expanded the range of activities on offer through additional funding secured from Sport England via Sportivate and StreetGames Doorstep Sport Club and CLUBI funding. Following consultation with the group, the range of activities was expanded to provide opportunities to take part in: mountain biking, boxercise (with Courtney Fry – Olympic Boxer) and other group based activities including running events.

## Outcomes to date

Key outcomes achieved to date have included:

- 28 young males being involved in the programme.
- Two qualified on an FA level 1 coaching course.
- Eight have returned to Education or Training.
- Five have gone into full time employment.
- A total of 220 volunteering hours have been accrued within various Sports Development Unit projects.
- 100% of the young people have stated a reduction in substance misuse.
- One has qualified as an A.B.A. Boxing tutor.

The positive changes are further evidenced by a number of individual stories and feedback from the young men themselves:

*"I am bored and there's nothing to do on this estate for people of my age, so we go out and have a drink with my mates and have a laugh!"*

*"This has done loads for us as it has kept us off the streets and has given us something to do. It's just amazing isn't it what you can do for us and my mates round here. There's nothing round this estate for our age. I'm constantly in the gym now. I have grown muscles and got fitter. Normally I would be getting in trouble or doing stuff that would get me into trouble, just makes it easier now. I'm living with my auntie; she has noticed a change in me as well"*

**Connor Joy**

*"Before I got involved with Colin I had no real purpose in my life.....I used to just hang around the estate, smoke weed when I could get it and have a drink with the lads at weekends, probably getting myself into trouble for no real reason."*

*Now, I am fit and healthier than I have ever been in my life and if I find myself going to the centre instead of hanging around the streets. I've managed to get a full time job now so I'm earning dough and I got a reference from Colin and he always gives me advice and support when I need it. I've also got my own flat now which has made a massive difference from living with me Nan. I just wish I could have got involved with something like this earlier."*

**Caston Ball**





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Other partners have also commented on the positive progress of the group:

*“Since this group have been engaged on the Positive Futures programme the attitude and general outlook/persona has changed beyond recognition. This also includes the group of young people who were circulating with the core group of ringleaders, as they have all been included and involved in activities within the centre. It has now come to the point that there is a regular group of young people doing the activities led by Colin Hunt. In some cases I have seen certain individuals like Caston Ball taking a lead within the group in the form of a mentoring role; obviously this type of empowerment has a positive effect on the rest of the young people, as proved in this case.”*

**Kevin O’Connell - Leisure Centre Duty Officer**

## Key Success Factors

A combination of factors has contributed to the success of the project including:

- Successfully securing funding from a range of partners that has enabled Positive Futures to include the group in a diverse range of sport and physical activities and engage a wide range of young males in the programme.
- Wirral Positive Futures has a proven track record in social inclusion. Staff have the key skills and techniques needed to engage the targeted young people and achieve the positive outcomes required for this project.
- Having the skills and expertise of specialist substance misuse workers from Response, in particular Alistair Smith



and Phil Hamilton, on hand for the individuals who needed their support.

- The Leisure Centre management and their staff in allowing this targeted group access to the leisure centre and giving them chance after chance when previously they would have possibly been excluded from the centre; an example of this being a reduction in prices for use of the main sports-hall on a Friday night and a Sunday afternoon, under the supervision of Colin Hunt from the Positive Futures Team.

## In conclusion

Positive Futures set out to 'work' with this targeted group of young males aged between 14 and 21 from an estate, in an attempt to engage the group in regular sport and physical activity.

The impact of the programme is perhaps best evidenced by the 'distance travelled' of the young people within the group and in particular how a number of 'core' individuals

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have benefitted in their outlook in life.

A knock on effect to this particular piece of work, has been the inclusion of other young people, thus providing an effective means of engaging challenging individuals who have made a decision to change, with an outcome which satisfies a particular problem - in this case unacceptable and / or Anti-Social Behaviour.

A pleasing example of this, is the Ball twins (Caston and Barrington,) previously they were permanently excluded from the Leisure Centre due to consistent, unacceptable behaviour and abuse, but since being referred onto the Positive Futures programme their attitude and outlook has positively changed for the better.

This has allowed for a mutual respect between the group and Centre to be built upon and as a result this two way approach has allowed for improved relationships that have benefitted in no uncertain terms to the community as a whole.

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## StreetGames

StreetGames is a national partner of Sport England and a centre of expertise for developing doorstep sport in disadvantaged communities.

The charity supports community based sports projects that deliver sport and volunteering opportunities to young people living in the 20% most deprived wards in the UK.

StreetGames works with National Governing Bodies of Sport to establish and develop links between community and mainstream sport. Recognised by the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games Inspire Mark, StreetGames is creating a lasting legacy of doorstep sport in the UK.

