ESTATE BASED SPORT, NEWHAM, LONDON

The contribution made by the estate based sports project to community cohesion in Newham

This project provides sports activities for young people in their own neighbourhoods. Its recent evaluation showed that it had been successful in bringing young people from different communities together and forging strong, new friendships and creating a sense of pride and belonging within their communities.

Background to the project

The project was designed to provide young people aged between 13–19 years with the opportunity to access sport close to their homes in Newham. It aimed to address three main issues: firstly, anti social behaviour by young people due to a lack of positive activities, secondly, unhealthy lifestyles due to poor access to facilities and opportunities and thirdly, underperformance at school due to lack of confidence and soft skills.

Newham is the sixth most deprived district in England and the third most deprived district in London.
The project

The project works in the following ways:
- Sports sessions provide 35 hours of sport per week in 17 neighbourhoods and are run by professional sports coaches.
- The sports available include football, basketball, non-contact boxing, fencing, dance and cricket and take place across 30-40 venues.
- The project is available to all Newham residents and attracts participants from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds.
- The project also offers routes into coaching and other qualifications including health and safety and youth work.
- The project offers the chance to volunteer in youth clubs and schools in order to build up experience ready for applying for jobs.

Partnerships and funding

A number of core partnerships were developed to support the delivery of this project. Partners included local, not-for profit organisations and also other departments and services within the local authority.

These partners include:
- Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme (Football U15; Basketball & Handball)
- Newham Swords (Fencing)
- South East Circular Projects (YOT Twilight Football 16 - 21)
- East London Dance (Dance)
- Omnibus Kids Gloves (Non-contact boxing)
- West Ham United Asians in Football Project
- Youth Offending Team
- Youth Inclusion Project
- Youth Service
- The Parks Service

The project was originally funded from 2004 – 08 by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) but it is now being sustained by mainstream funding and some partnership funding from the East Thames and London and Quadrant Housing groups.

Learning points

- Young people from different communities do get involved in sport if it is delivered in their own neighbourhoods.
- Effective partnership working which involves local organisations in the direct delivery of projects is important as it gives them more ownership of the project.
Robust project management is vital - the tendering process ensured that organisations were required to apply basic management principles and to have in place the resources to deliver the project.

- Workforce skills development – the project set mandatory requirements for coaches & administrators to possess appropriate training and qualifications.
- Effective monitoring & evaluation helps to give evidence about whether the project is successful and it also helps the project to develop for the future.
- Needs led provision ensures that the project has been set up to meet community needs.
- Long term investment is required to ensure that local communities participate sufficiently to experience the benefits of participation.

**Outcomes**

The recent evaluation that has been carried out shows the following outcomes:-

- The majority of respondents agreed that Estate Based Sports helped to improve their perception of their connection to the community, with almost three quarters agreeing that they have made new friends through the sports sessions.
- 67 percent of respondents agreed that the sports sessions make Newham a better place to live.
- The project has demonstrated that people have enjoyed mixing with others from their local community from varied backgrounds so contributing to a stronger community.
- A further positive impact finding was that the sports activities had resulted in new relationships being formed with other young participants, in the main these were relatively strong relationships (for example, most knew where their new acquaintances lived) and tended to be with people from different backgrounds to them (most interpreted different backgrounds to mean ‘from different countries and of different religions’).
- The project has succeeded in working with a wide range of young people from different backgrounds. 31 percent of respondents were from white ethnic backgrounds (compared to 39 percent of Newham’s total population); 41 percent were from black backgrounds (compared to 22 percent of Newham’s total population) and 13 percent from Asian ethnic backgrounds (compared to 33 percent of Newham’s total population).
- A number of the participants went on to obtain qualifications and experience through the project and gained paid employment as a direct result.

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