
Stoke City Football Club
Community Programme

Pilot ***Stoke Challenge*** Project

Independent Evaluation
May 2007

Consultant's Statement

Wider Impact Consultancy is pleased to commend the Stoke City Football Club pilot Community Programme, **Stoke Challenge** Project.

It is a unique Programme, professionally delivered and has the potential to play a positive role in breaking the cycle of deprivation in Stoke on Trent. It is a model of 'good practice', which is worthy of further development and roll out.

Edwin Lewis

Wider Impact Consultancy
May 2007

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The Stoke City Football Club
Community Programme

Stoke Challenge
Project



Report and Multi-Media Link
www.stokechallenge.co.uk

Commissioned by

Connexions Staffordshire

Delivered By

Wider Impact Consultancy
Inspired Film & Video
Wonderweb Design

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1. Executive Summary

Stoke on Trent is currently ranked the eighteenth most deprived local authority area in the Country. It also has highest proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (**NEET**).

Funded by Local Strategic Partnership Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, the **Stoke Challenge** is an ambitious Connexions Programme that aims to provide targeted support to young people who are at risk of becoming NEET, or who are NEET and for whom statutory intervention by schools, colleges, Connexions and partner agencies and providers has not worked.

Building on an ethos of supporting local communities, the Stoke City Football Club Community Programme has embraced the concept of the **Stoke Challenge** and has piloted an innovative club based Programme that aims to help local NEET young people get into work or training.

Launched in February 2007 the Stoke City Football Club Community Programme has provided support to **24** local NEET young people. An impressive **75%** of the intake have either gained employment or will be moving onto further education or training. As will be highlighted within this report, young people, many of whom who have never previously completed any courses or training have, over a twelve week period taken on real challenges. These include hill walking, surviving 24 hours in the wilds of Wales, canoeing across open water, gaining a first aid qualification and passing a motor scooter test.

Most significantly, they have gained access to an aspirational sporting environment, where they have learnt that following rules, team working, keeping healthy and maintaining a positive and realistic outlook brings results. They have met Stoke City Football Club first team players and training staff, who have had time to stop and help them build their confidence and resilience. They have learnt the importance of hard work and planning.

Such is the success of this pilot Programme; Stoke City Football Club in partnership with Connexions will be delivering **4** more Programmes to **96** NEET young people living in Stoke on Trent this year. Stoke City Football Club, Connexions Staffordshire, the Stoke on Trent Local Strategic Partnership and most importantly the young people should be commended for their involvement in such an innovative and worthwhile **Stoke Challenge** initiative.

2. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for making this report possible. Support has included data and information and honest feedback on 'what works' and the value of the Programme to young NEET people and the wider Stoke on Trent community.

Stoke City Football Club

Tony Scholes, Chief Executive, Stoke City Football Club

Adrian Hurst, Programme Manager, Stoke City Football Club Community Programme

David Edwards, Personal Development Coach, Stoke City Football Club Community Programme

Alan Machin, Assistant Personal Development Coach, Stoke City Football Club Community Programme

Connexions Staffordshire

David Bartrum

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Sarah Meakin

Bryans Road Safety Centre

Kevin Bryan, Bryans Road Safety Centre

Stoke on Trent Local Strategic Partnership

The Class of February 2007

Rachael Cotton

Ben Shutt

Adam Ridge

Dave Lacono

Chris Pike

Gareth Jones

Sam Prewett

Matthew Steele

Stacey Emery

Antony Ollier

Gemma Vernon

Toni Thomas

Tomo Walker

Craig Haworth

Kieron John

Simon Baddeley

Dan Maskery

Ian Franklin

Nathan Mason

Shane Walley

3. Terms of Reference

1. To explore the effectiveness of the pilot Stoke City Football Club, **Stoke Challenge** Programme in helping young people who are classed as NEET, into work, education or further training;
2. To deliver a multi-media report, in the following formats:
 - a. Hard copy
 - b. CD Rom
 - c. Web based

4. Methodology

Wider Impact Consultancy has worked in partnership with Inspired Film and Video and Wonderweb Design to ensure that those reading this report or viewing the website www.stokechallenge.co.uk gain an in-depth understanding of this pilot programme. We are aiming the report at a wide and varied audience, which includes:

- Young people who have completed the Programme
- Young people who are thinking of joining the Programme
- Programme Staff
- Stoke City Football Club
- Connexions
- Stoke on Trent Local Strategic Partnership
- Partner-agency members
- Potential sponsors / partners
- Agencies and multi-agency partnerships that are considering developing a similar programme
- Individuals, agencies and organisations that will value being aware of 'what works' and how important it is to support young people such as the 'stars' of this multi-media report

We are grateful to Programme staff and partner-agency members for providing data and information for this report. Most importantly we are grateful to the young people who have agreed to be interviewed and filmed; and for providing such honest and useful feedback.

5. About the Stoke Challenge

Funded by Stoke on Trent Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), the **Stoke Challenge** has been developed by Connexions Staffordshire to provide coordinated, targeted, partnership support to young people who are at risk of becoming 'NEET'. In such cases, statutory intervention by school, colleges, Connexions, partner agencies and providers has not worked, or there is no existing provision within mainstream funding.

The aim of this provision will be to pilot approaches which are not funded and could then be mainstreamed through the Learning & Skills Council.

Target Groups

Target groups include vulnerable groups, teenage parents, young offenders, the homeless, looked after children and those who are identified as NEET and currently do not engage.

Objectives

- Reduction in the proportion of NEETs;
- Early intervention of 'at risk' young people becoming NEET;
- Positive destinations for young people who are classed as NEET;
- Re-engagement with appropriate young people over 17 years;
- Successful work experience and 'work tasters';
- Improved skills.

Partnership Approach

Three stands, involving a multi-agency partnership approach have been adopted:

- **Prevention** – focusing on school target groups and vulnerable young people such as young offenders and teenage mums;
- **Engagement** – focusing in hot spot areas, aimed at finding and engaging young people, developing engagement activities which are fun, motivational and challenging.
- **Provision** – developing provision for young people who are not able to cope with mainstream provision, because of barriers such as confidence, behaviour and social barriers.

6. About the Stoke City Football Club Community Programme

Background

During the course of 2006, Stoke City Football Club Community Programme delivered sport specific coaching to over **75,000** young people in and around Staffordshire.

With around 350 schools in its catchment area, Community Programme staff are kept very busy helping many young people strive for an improved lifestyle with the help of sport.

Programme staff have built up excellent relationships with schools, agencies such as Connexions Staffordshire and local community groups. By introducing young people to physical activities, they strive for better physical condition, which can lead to improved states of mind. Staff are not just delivering football sessions; the coaching team are also qualified to deliver a whole range of sports, including rugby, cricket, hockey and athletics. Programme aims include offering sport to young people so they can experience different activities and have the opportunity to develop new skills.

Tackling Social Inclusion

Building on four years of experience delivering projects such as Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP), which is funded by the Government Office for the West Midlands; a crime prevention initiative, aimed at keeping 'at risk' young people meaningfully occupied; the Community Programme Team is proud of their role in developing this unique and important 'flagship' programme, aimed at supporting young people who have missed out on vital opportunities which can shape the future of their lives. **Stoke Challenge** has become an integral project to the Club, which staff, players and partner organisations are delighted to support.

As Chief Executive, **Tony Scholes** points out, *'the Club is proud to be delivering such an innovative and exciting component of the **Stoke Challenge**. Linked to our excellent facilities, our Community Programme Team is combining their considerable expertise and knowledge with the experience and skills of Connexions staff. We have created a unique and exciting programme for local young people who most value our support. Stoke City Football Club is committed to supporting our **local communities** and look forward to taking this programme to new and challenging heights!'*

7. A Special Programme!

By being based at Stoke City Football Club, there is no doubt the young people are benefiting from excellent facilities, which includes highly qualified and committed Club and Connexions staff; and most significantly, an **aspirational environment**, which does not fail to '*rub off*' on everyone who enters the Club.

Commenced **February 2007**, with a grant of **£25.700** from the LSP; the Programme challenges the young people **physically and mentally** and enables them to appreciate that hard work can bring success. There is no doubt that regular access to professional footballers and coaches, reinforces this ethos.

Available to young people not in education, employment or training, the pilot initiative offered a **twelve week** programme, which young people attend **two full days each week**. Future programmes will be delivered as part of a ten week package (see Section 10 'What's Next for the Programme').

Aim of the programme - the aim of the programme is simple - *To motivate young people into employment, college or training*. The programme is split into two main elements, both of which encourage young people to adopt positive values into their lives. The **first element** includes activities that focus on learning by doing, which includes sports based learning, where the young people gain experience in sports leadership, first aid, fitness and exercise and adopting a healthy life style.

The second element challenges the young people's attitude and behaviour, encouraging a positive work ethic and positive view towards learning. Negative perceptions of classrooms are challenged by introducing literacy and numeracy in an informal and supportive environment. This allows the young people to address poor classroom behaviour, anger management, basic skills, poor work ethic and negative views of learning.

All aspects of the programme reward positive behaviour and achievement, enabling the young people to begin to appreciate that hard work does pay off. Players contribute to this ethos, as they point out for example, that no matter what successes they gain on the pitch, they recognise the value of further education and training as they prepare for careers after football.

Programme Content

The pilot Programme lasted for twelve weeks and is structured to provide young people with the **resilience** they need to overcome negative perceptions and make positive contributions to their future lives. Activities are based in a classroom / Club Executive Box (with a view of the pitch); and within other sport related environments. Young people are collected from home by Programme staff from **8am** in the morning. Challenges become harder as the Programme progresses, which helps to focus the minds of the young people.

Weeks One and Two – are about team building, building relationships, physical activities, agreeing ground rules. Pro-social modelling is introduced, where they are praised for good work and challenges when they become negative without good reason.

Weeks Two to Four – are about challenging existing perceptions about unemployment, training and worklessness. Group sessions such as '**Stuck in a Rut**' and '**Get Real**', enable the young people to challenge negative views instilled in them by their peers and past bad experiences in environments such as school, college or the workplace. They are encouraged to review unrealistic ambitions and focus on what is achievable and what **they** need to do to achieve their goals.

Weeks Four to Seven – are about '*toughening up*', learning how to become **resilient**, understanding there will be knock backs and how **hard work** and **effort** is more likely to bring results than doing nothing and waiting for things to happen. The young people are encouraged to evaluate their lives and their progress on the Programme. Team work is encouraged and tasks such as raft building on open water, become harder and harder to complete. They learn about benefits such as Jobseekers allowances; and how a good job can bring in the money they want to match their desired life style.

Weeks Seven to Twelve – are about **motivation** and making things happen in their lives. They work out budgets and the type of job they need to carry out their chosen life style. They are helped to be realistic and understand that it will take time to get the job they most want. Opportunities such as work experience are offered and they are encouraged to apply for jobs and further training opportunities.

8. What's in it for Young People?

Real Challenges!

There are no doubts that the young people are enjoying responding to **Stoke 'Challenges'**, such as:

- Gaining new qualifications, passing a motor bike Compulsory Basic Training Course (CBT) and gaining a scooter licence;
- Surviving 24 hours in the 'wild' in Wales
- Taking part in a midnight walk in a remote forest;
- Canoeing across open water, climbing a 50 foot rock face;
- Taking part in a mountain bike challenge; and
- Most importantly, communicating, meeting new friends and working as part of a team.

Key to the Programme is the young people are challenged in terms of **physical effort** and **perceptions** they may have on **personal issues** such as being long-term unemployed, how much money they need to live the lives they want, the value of being employed, confidence levels and how they get on with other people.

Of the 'Class of February 2007'

- **10** young people have passed the **CBT Course** (Motor Scooter)
- **8** more are due to complete the CBT Course
- **20** young people have passed a Staffordshire Ambulance Service NHS **Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation Course**
- **20** young people have been made aware of a **Sports Leaders Course**
- **4** young people have been accepted onto a **Princes Trust** programme
- **5** young people have gained **full attendance** and will be receiving a **special letter** from the Club to include as a reference for job applications
- **2** young people were involved in the selection process of a new full-time member of staff, which will be useful for including within CVs

9. What Next for the Young People?

Impressive Results

The below table outlines outcomes achieved by the Stoke City Community Programme **Stoke Challenge** Programme. As will be noted, an impressive **75%** (18) of the intake have either gained employment or will be moving onto further education or training.

Outcome	Number
Securing full-time employment	6
Planning to return to college	2
To receive continued support into education	8
Referred to Step Up 2	2
Left for medical reasons*	1
Moved out of the area	1
Left course of own accord*	1
Asked to leave the course due to behaviour*	3
Total	24

* All the young people who have not completed the programme will be given the opportunity to join another **Stoke Challenge** Programme and will continue to receive support from the Stoke Division Connexions team.

Gemma perhaps highlights what the programme is all about. She is 16 and is looking forward to going to **college** in September. *'I have just got my scooter licence and my mum has bought me a scooter, which will mean I am now mobile. I just haven't got the confidence to get on a bus and I can get to College now and meet my friends. Gemma is clear about what she has got out of the programme, '**Confidence**, that's the main thing. I am no longer worried about meeting new people and am really proud of myself for passing the scooter test. It is the first test I have ever passed!'*

Connexions staff are amazed at the progress Gemma has made. Prior to joining the programme, her confidence was, '*at rock bottom*'. She has never missed a day of the Programme and joined in physical activities such as canoeing, hill walking and rock climbing.

Nathan is 17 and was nominated for the Programme by a partner agency. He is looking to enroll as an **Apprentice**. '*The programme has kept me busy and out of trouble. I have enjoyed the trips and meeting new people. I am now looking forward to getting a good job and looking after myself*' Nathan has a driving ambition to becoming a plumber.

Both have a clear message to anyone thinking of joining the programme:

'Just join and make the most of it. You will meet new people, achieve new things and build up your confidence and self-esteem. Most importantly, you will enjoy it and have fun!'

10. What Next for the Programme?

Short Term

All the young people who have not secured employment or training will be invited to return to the Club each Wednesday for **6 weeks** to receive 1:1 support in areas such as CV writing and applying for employment. In short, Programme staff will not give up on them and will be working with them to achieve their objectives.

Further Programmes

The Club is delighted to secure further NRF funding from the **LSP** to deliver **4** more **Stoke Challenge Programmes** during 2007/08, which will enable a further **96** NEET young people to take advantage of the Programme at the Club. Learning from the pilot Programme, future programmes will be delivered as part of a comprehensive **ten week** package.

The Club has also secured new funding from the NRF, to enhance the programme, by providing engagement activities, such as involvement in a planned weekly '**midnight league**', which will also involve other agencies targeting NEETS and other hard to reach 'at risk' young people from across the County.

Future Plans

Such is their commitment to the Programme, the Club and Connexions staff are exploring opportunities to 'mainstream' it, with ambitious objectives such as:

- Designing and building a purpose made resource centre within the Club and in sight of the Stoke City Football Club pitch, aimed at supporting NEETS and adult 'worklessness' groups;
- Becoming an accredited entry to employment (E2E) provider;
- Working with young people to create social enterprise opportunities, such as a motor scooter lease/hire scheme.

Working with Football in the Community, consideration is being given to applying for funding to the Football Foundation to support development of the Programme.

12. Conclusions

There is no doubt that the Stoke City Football Club **Stoke Challenge** Programme is achieving objectives.

Of the 24 NEET young people who enrolled on the Programme in February 2007, **75%** have either gained employment, are enrolling in college, or undertaking further education or training. None of the young people who dropped out will be forgotten, as they have been picked up by the Connexions Division Team.

At a cost of just over **£1,000** per person, the Programme has proven '**value for money**' in supporting young people who mainstream provision has failed and risk becoming a drain on ever scarce resources. Wider impacts are likely to include issues such as worklessness, health, crime and anti-social behaviour.

Most importantly, the young people themselves are now more likely to achieve their aims and become contributing members of society; helping break a chain of deprivation, which has become all too familiar in Stoke on Trent.

Wider Impact Consultancy has been looking for the '**magic dust**' that has made this pilot Programme a success. There are a number of ingredients, which can only be found by visiting the young people at **Stoke City Football Club**:

- An **aspirational** sporting environment
- Commitment from the Club, with access to **superb facilities**
- Committed and well trained support staff, who are willing to travel that '**extra mile**'
- **Respect** for the young people, who are treated as young adults
- A **positive atmosphere** of mutual trust and self-belief
- A programme that **listens** and is **flexible** to the needs of NEET young people
- **Challenges** that test and motivate young people who have been let down for most of their young lives