

North East Drug Interventions Programme Sports Initiative

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) is a large scale Home Office funded crime reduction programme which seeks to get drug using offenders into treatment and retain them there in order to reduce their levels of offending. Treatment programmes which offer pharmacological and psychological interventions are key to this behavioural change, but there are problems in getting individuals to engage in the process and when they do in sustaining the early treatment gains. Many individuals have a range of additional problems and difficulties largely resulting from social exclusion and there is a need to develop programmes and interventions more suited to their needs and interests linking in to learning, skills and employment as part of the essential “wrap around services”. Sport offers an excellent means of overcoming the obstacles of engagement and retention whilst also providing a very positive intervention and way forward. Interestingly, it has rarely played a part in adult programmes of crime reduction or drug rehabilitation, though the Positive Futures Programme run with young offenders has clearly identified the value that sport has in engaging with hard to reach groups.

1.2 Introduction

Since May 2005 the DIP Team in Government Office North East has pioneered the development of a series of football training programmes throughout North East England as part of a unique Drug Interventions Programme sports initiative supported by the North East's five main universities. Drug users were given the opportunity to attend the 8-week university based coaching courses which ran for one and a half hours on one day per week. Individuals were provided with sports kit which they were allowed to keep and were supported in getting to the coaching sessions by key workers from the drug agencies. Once on the programme individuals were allocated to a team with its own coach who led the training sessions and worked with the same group of drug users for the duration of the course. The majority participated in football coaching and a final tournament which were affiliated with the F.A. but other more individual sports options were available for those who wanted to do something else. Every participant received a trophy or award at the end of their programme. Across the region courses have now taken place in Newcastle (3), Teesside (2), Sunderland (1) and Durham (1). Seven programmes have now been held between May 2005 and October 2006 involving 36 university student coaches, over 400 drug service users and 33 drug agencies. A total of 25 of the student coaches managed to achieve an FA Level 1 or 2 coaching qualification.

This report presents the findings of the Drug Interventions Programme Sports Initiative.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The initiative primarily aimed to use sport to increase drug users engagement with drug treatment, to improve their health and the quality of their lives and to re-integrate them back into the community, whilst accessing its resources. It also aimed to improve communication between agencies and to enhance the work of existing support services across the North East. These aims were achieved through the following objectives:

- An 8-week coaching programme of football and sports related activities aimed primarily at Drug Misusing Offenders;
- A linked 8-week coaching course run for university students to achieve their FA Level 1 coaching qualification;
- The creation of a structured, rehabilitative programme offering an additional context for drug treatment services;
- The construction of a programme that improves the engagement and retention of “hard to reach” individuals;
- The development of a broader recreational environment and culture offering an alternative to drug dependency.

As programmes rolled out and were refined through practice learning, the following areas were developed and became incorporated as objectives:

- Initial steps towards developing an associated “healthy living” programme;
- Development of employment opportunities for drug service users through coaching awards.

1.4 Methodology

The methodology which has informed this evaluation adopted an 'action research' approach, consisting of taped interviews, focus groups, and a series of questionnaires which were completed throughout the course of each 8-week programme. Each of the three key elements, the drug service users' experiences, the key workers' perspective and the impact on the student coaches were then evaluated using a multi-dimensional approach. A total of 95 evaluation forms were completed by service users following the tournaments. Focus groups and interviews were conducted with a total of 29 service users from 3 of the programmes. Interviews and feedback sessions were also carried out with five key drug agency staff who were closely involved with individual programmes, and regular meetings were held throughout each programme with all parties involved. Throughout the course of the programmes two sets of questionnaires were received from 26 students across the 5 universities, and from these a further seven interviews were carried out with individual student coaches to gather more in depth information to inform future programmes. Finally, one student coach kept a diary of their experiences and this usefully documented the personal changes and development which he underwent over the course of the programme.

1.5 Key Findings

1. The partnership approach between the North East Drug Interventions Programme and the 5 North East universities has been successful, with all the key individuals involved taking an active part in the programmes and working effectively together.
2. The provision of sport is extremely attractive to drug service users and has improved engagement and retention in wider drug treatment programmes.
3. Sport and physical exercise provide "added value" to drug rehabilitation programmes in that they help to increase a sense of well-being, healthy living, diet awareness and social engagement. They also foster a range of social and organisational skills such as punctuality, teamwork, self management, and concentration.
4. In the light of the important gains that sport can help to achieve, involvement and participation needs to be featured within drug users' Care Plans.
5. The coaching programme is the change agent, not the tournament at the end of it. The tournament may serve as an incentive and a motivator but tournaments alone and one-off sporting events cannot deliver any of the gains that programmes as a whole can manage. Sports coaching programmes are, in effect a structured intervention.
6. The success of the initiative is dependent upon collaborative working between drug service agencies.
7. The establishment of mutual respect and trust between participants, coaches and key workers was key to the engagement and retention of the service users over the eight-week period.
8. For some drug users, involvement in the initiative has provided the basis of an alternative community with a different set of 'rules' to those which govern long-term drug use. Service users commented on the value they placed on the regular social interaction they experienced in a setting outside of the usual "drugs context" in which they normally associate.
9. The programmes have been a mechanism to identify subgroups of individuals who can often be particularly hard to reach and support, such as the homeless and single parent mothers.
10. The initiative has clearly demonstrated the benefits of using the universities and their students as coaches. For the service users these include a wide range of high standard sports facilities, an insight into education opportunities and contact with coaches to answer related questions. Additionally the involvement of 'non' drug users in the initiative which "plays down" the drug histories of participants and offers positive role models as 'mentors' for the service users has been a success.
11. The programme fitted perfectly with the Sport Universities North East England initiative which focuses on inclusion, increased participation and the development of performance within and outside the universities. This is part of the Government's wider social inclusion agenda.
12. The initiative also highlighted the benefits for the university students. Firstly they gained experience in coaching an adult client group and in achieving an FA coaching qualification. Secondly, the initiative allowed students to develop an understanding and appreciation of a different social group and gain experience working with them which added to their CVs.
13. On a broader scale the initiative has also highlighted the benefits to the wider community by involving drug service users and university students. This socialization process has linked in a marginalized and socially excluded group with a privileged socially advantaged group and

bridging this gap develops community cohesion. The secondary benefits to society are found as the numbers of drug misusing offenders in the community are reduced.

1.6 Additional Developments

A number of other developments emerged as off-shoots of the sports programmes that were not part of this overall evaluation but which merit further investigation for the added value that they could offer. Others are things that are important to try to research and develop:

Healthy living and diet awareness

The sports initiative is viewed as a useful tool to encourage diet awareness. Following the first programme in Newcastle, a 10 week pilot programme with a specific focus on healthy living was developed between the Government Office and one local agency and a more recent programme concentrating on physical activity and nutrition for women drug users commenced in September 2006. Service users have commented they would like to see diet and nutrition incorporated within future programmes. The universities are supportive of this.

Diversity

During the course of the initiative every effort was made to ensure that nobody was excluded from participation because of race, gender, sexuality, disability, religious beliefs or ability. Many areas included service users in the organisation and planning of programmes to maximise engagement and to help address issues of diversity. Women drug users are a particularly vulnerable group and Durham, Teesside, Northumbria and Sunderland Universities all offered gender specific programmes which proved to be very popular and attracted small but committed groups of women. Feedback indicated that as part of a broader package on interventions this might help many women to tackle drug misuse by improving health, self esteem and reducing associated personal problems. Diversity is an area which needs further development and evaluation.

B.B.V training for students

Prior to the programme Teesside University student coaches were given blood borne virus training and advice by practice nurses from a drug prescribing service based in Middlesbrough. This awareness raising exercise was viewed by the student coaches as useful and informative, and added value to the programme. This is an area the initiative would like to see developed.

Prisons

As part of the National Offender Management Services Strategy to provide a 'seamless sentence', links have been made with HMP Low Newton, HMP Holme House and the Universities of Durham and Teesside. Two pilot projects in Durham and Teesside are currently being established. The projects will be aimed at male and female DIP/PPO drug misusing prisoners. It is recognized that many prisoners acquire a mix of accredited sports qualifications whilst serving custodial sentences. However anecdotal evidence suggests that most of the qualifications are not utilised when an offender returns to the community. As a result, many offenders return to drug misuse and criminal behaviour.

Police Involvement

Key workers commented on the potential for police trainees who are required to do community placements to become involved in future programmes. This has been viewed as a positive opportunity to breakdown barriers and reduce the stereotypical view of problematic drug users.

Fire Brigade

As part of their overall prevention role, the Fire Brigade have played an increasingly active part in supporting work with offenders and excluded groups offering physical activity, first aid and other training within locally delivered courses. These have concentrated on work with young people but with limited adaptation could be used to work with adults, with scope for a whole range of further developments including links to training, skills and employment.

2. STUDENT COACHES

A total of 36 university students acted as coaches during the 8-week programmes, and from the outset the relationship between coaches and service users was recognized as one of the key dynamics. At the same time it was acknowledged to be a relationship between two very dissimilar groups, which can bring problems of communication. It was therefore important to consider and monitor the students' experience to ensure they felt fully supported at all times and to ensure that the programmes adapted to accommodate the respective needs of both groups.

Success of each programme was dependent on appropriate support being provided for the student coaches, and this was achieved by three main methods. First the students were comprehensively briefed on the programme and the client group prior to the first session. Second, at least one key worker from each agency was present at every training session. Finally, two sets of questionnaires aimed at capturing the process and monitoring the students' experience were collected from the student coaches throughout each programme (see Appendix 2).

2.1 Questionnaire Findings and Interviews

1. Students were really clear about **what they hoped to gain** from involvement in the programme. In the first instance, based upon their experience of the first four sessions, students said that they wanted to gain:

- FA Level 1 coaching qualification
- Experience in coaching
- Experience in coaching an adult client group

Their answers at the end of the programmes had changed and were much broader. At this stage they said that they were wanting:

- Confidence to communicate in an authoritative way
- Extra leadership skills
- The chance to mix with different people
- Experience working with people of varying age and different backgrounds
- To give something back to society

These broader responses suggest that the students considered they had 'got more' out of the programme and at a far deeper level than initially expected.

"Additional to the qualification I think I have been able to give something back to the community as I have been very fortunate compared to most" (Student coach, Durham University)

"I'm so glad I've taken the time to be part of something so positive. I really feel that this project will be of great benefit to society." (Student coach, Durham University)

"I've seen such a great improvement in so many of the clients it's without doubt had a very positive impact on their lives and I'm so glad to have been a part of it." (Student coach, Durham University)

2. Student **attitudes towards the client group** that they were to coach were of interest. The majority *"felt positive"* about the client group they were going to coach, but some felt less so. Attitudes changed at the end of the programme and all felt positively towards drug users and their situation.

"I went in to the coaching sessions expecting the worst. Having no experience of working with this group I expected them to be like everything that I'd seen on T.V about criminals and drug users. My opinions have completely changed about this group. I've really enjoyed myself and got a lot out of this experience - more than I was expecting. Everyone got on really well". (Student coach, Newcastle University)

"I have to admit I had some prejudicial ideas about them. Having got to know some of them my prejudices are gone and the experience has made me a better person as a result I think." (Student coach, Durham University)

3. Irrespective of their initial attitude towards drug users, more than half of the students felt **apprehensive** before first meeting the clients. High levels of apprehension should be expected and adequate support for student coaches must be provided and sustained. The second half of the programmes indicated that levels of anxiety amongst the students had reduced considerably. None felt apprehensive and all reported that they felt positive when anticipating the next session.

“Though I was apprehensive about what the clients would think about me and how they would react it has made me realise that they are just the same as anyone else.”
(Student coach, Durham University)

“I was worried, but that’s because coaching’s a pressure situation. I respected the fact that they were making an effort and felt completely safe.” (Student coach, Sunderland University)

“Just at the start you were a little bit like “what’s this gonna be like?” but as soon as you got started they were just listening from the off. They listened, and did everything you asked them.” (Student coach, Northumbria University)

4. The majority of students felt that **they were well supported** and all agreed that they were well briefed before meeting the client group. This was consistent throughout each programme.

“The presence of the appropriate people was beneficial as I felt completely at ease and could concentrate on delivering a coaching session and did not have to be worried about any problems arising.” (Student coach, Newcastle University)

“There were always people on the side lines who the lads were talking to and there was always the appropriate support present.” (Student coach, Northumbria University)

5. **Good communication** between coaches and players was essential for a successful experience. Throughout each programme the overwhelming majority agreed that they found it easy to communicate with their team. Future programmes will ensure that where students are struggling appropriate action will be taken.

“...I am much more comfortable taking coaching sessions now...I know the players names now which makes it easier to communicate and probably makes the players feel wanted as part of the group.” (Student coach, Newcastle University)

6. Perceptions about **how well participants listened and responded** to the coaching appeared to improve over the course of the programmes. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is excellent and 10 is poor, feedback from the first four sessions was mixed. Broadly, sessions one to four found the majority of students rated the service users’ listening and response between 5 and 6. In the second half of the programmes this improved significantly with the majority rating their teams’ listening and response as between 1 and 4.

“... They listened to what we said and were respectful. This built up the more the sessions progressed, and the more both service users and coaches got into it.”
(Student coach, Teesside University)

[week2] *“I wanted to make a good impression on the people I was coaching - I wanted to earn their respect. However I thought there would be more fooling around & less listening to me.”* (Student coach, Newcastle University)

“The group seemed more responsive this week and listened and participated far more than previous week” (Student coach, Newcastle University)

"I've coached quite a few different teams and different groups, including children, but that's the most that I've got out of anything coaching-wise and seen somebody develop." (Student coach, Teesside University)

7. Students felt that **the level of rapport** which was established between themselves and the clients improved as the programmes progressed. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is excellent and 10 is poor, the first four sessions were broadly rated between 4 and 8, whereas the second half was rated by all the students between 1 and 4.

"When they first turned up a lot of them weren't very confident... by the end of it we had them playing in teams playing in the tournament and feeling quite confident in their ability." (Student coach, Teesside University)

"Initially I thought that they wouldn't want to learn or wouldn't be as friendly, however that was definitely not the case." (Student coach, Durham University)

"[week7] Can speak to most players openly & have a laugh with them...good banter this week...very good session" (Student coach, Newcastle University)

8. All student coaches said that they **enjoyed being involved in the programme** throughout its duration, which is an encouraging reflection on the overall benefits and value of the initiative.

"That's the most satisfaction from coaching for a long time. Just basically because they were so 'oh thanks for that, it was great we'll see you next week, really enjoyed it!" (Student coach, Northumbria University)

"The experience has certainly made me realize that I would consider working with this group! I think it might be something I could work up to." (Student coach, Teesside University)

"It has given me the chance to mix with those I wouldn't ordinarily have done, made some friends and had fun!" (Student coach, Durham University)

2.2 Summary

Following the programmes, further interviews were carried out with student coaches. Certain areas were identified where improvements could be made. These included:

- To have a required standard of student coaches. It was strongly suggested that this was essential to establish and retain a level of respect from the service users, and to ensure a high quality of coaching throughout the course of the programme. A minimum standard of FA level 1 was felt to be a prerequisite.
- To have an idea of the number of attendees prior to sessions. Although it was recognized exact numbers may not be possible, key workers could help to give an estimate, allowing for sessions to be better planned and provided.
- Input from key workers within the coaching sessions was unhelpful. Where key workers became involved in the training sessions themselves, or shouted support and/or criticism from the sidelines it detracted from the quality of coaching the students could provide and tended to undermine their authority. This input tended to negatively impact on the service users' experience during sessions.

Overwhelmingly, student coaches felt that for them the programme had been a success, and indicated a positive interest in taking part again or working with the client group in the future. When reflecting on why the experience was so positive, they indicated a range of benefits the programme generated that extended beyond a coaching qualification. These included a more rounded, realistic perception of society, and a sense of satisfaction at having had an opportunity to "give something back" to the community. In terms of personal development, the active work experience enhanced C.V's while stimulating a range of ideas and possibilities for future careers. All but one student said that without this experience it was unlikely they would have had the opportunity or considered working with this group in the future. Considerable emphasis was placed on the importance of the briefing prior to the programme and the support from key workers at each session. It was noted where a lack of collaborative working from some agencies hindered the service users' experience of the programme. It was felt this support

was central to sustain the established respect and good relationship between student coaches and service users. This was backed up by an existing rapport between the student coaches which supported each others confidence and presented a positive image to the service users. While a mutual respect, a similarity in age, and an underpinning support network were all identified as contributory factors, the prevailing reason given to the success of the initiative by each of the student coaches was that it was based on sport.

"I think because it was football, everyone was there to play just that. It's like football's a 'neutral territory'" (Student coach, Newcastle University)

3. KEY WORKERS PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Sport and Rehabilitation

The importance of wrap around services is recognised by the Home Office in its guidelines on aftercare and re-settlement which underpin much of the practice within the Drug Interventions Programme. The need for key workers to support and help clients with accommodation, learning and skills and employment issues and to incorporate them into care plans is vital and after many years, the place and role of sport, physical activity and well-being as an important part of rehabilitation and re-integration is finally beginning to be recognised.

"A lot of clients want to be more active. Boredom and lack of self- esteem, self-belief and self-confidence are a major factor in their problems. They need a job, they need somewhere to live, and they need all sorts of stuff. And it's not having these that leads to the drugs or the alcohol misuse in the first place." (Addaction, Durham)

"Sport encourages clients to make positive life choices and take control of their health and fitness. Sport can provide opportunities to compete, have fun, discover ones limitations and relieve boredom by giving structure to free time and improving mental health." (De Paul Trust, Newcastle)

"When looking at a comprehensive assessment of our clients' needs it's important to consider the totality of those needs not just the obvious ones. Very often there's not enough diversity in our responses, but having different sports initiatives allows us to personalise the package of care for each client and give them choices which are enthusiastically received and can significantly enhance the effectiveness of interventions within treatment modalities. Programmes like these provide clients with the opportunity of gaining confidence, new skills and opportunities to counteract the marginalisation process which these clients experience on a daily basis." (NECA, Darlington)

"The lads who have been taking part in the coaching have come back in saying 'I didn't half sleep well after the football on Fridays' and 'I don't half feel better about myself like I feel like I've done a bit.'" (Pathway Project, Middlesbrough)

3.2 Implementation issues

Key worker input is vital to the success of the initiative, and collaborative working between agencies is required if programmes are to run effectively and service user involvement maximised. Difficulties were encountered around a number of aspects in different areas, although feedback indicated that these problems will be used constructively to inform future programmes.

"I'm quite amazed to get so many different people from such a large area. It's easier to get a lot of people from a city location but when you're bringing bus loads of people from everywhere around it takes more time, money, organization, persuasion and patience, and collaborative working." (Addaction, Durham)

There were a number of specific factors that key workers identified as crucial to the success of the initiative.

3.2.1 Need for Multi-agency Involvement and Co-ordination

Flexibility was required and a need for drug agencies to work together was recognized as essential to maximise the potential of each programme.

“Within the Darlington and Durham Project there were high levels of co-operation and engagement from all partners, which included NHS, Probation, and Voluntary sector staff. For future programmes there would be gains to be had from the appointment of appropriate leads within each service that the co-ordinator can liaise with thus ensuring that the initiative doesn’t become dependent upon inter agency communication issues which can then become lost in the larger conflicting agenda debate” (NECA, Darlington)

A lack of communication and co-ordination between agencies hindered some programmes. It was recognized however that this initiative was new and ‘progressive’ to most areas and it is hoped that a more proactive, collaborative approach will be adopted by all agencies in the future. Programmes will improve as more agencies become involved.

“We do communicate, but there’s a lot of history between some agencies and we are trying to build bridges, and eradicate problems that have gone on in the past and we’ve seen this football [programme] as a tool for us to engage with each other.” (Pathway Project, Middlesbrough)

“There seemed to be little communication between the agencies until they got to the football training. This hindered the work as communication would have certainly helped with the transport issues.” (De Paul Trust, Newcastle)

“It’s all about the clients. Sometimes you can sit in a meeting and put a client in the middle of the table and at the end of the day, no-one’s talking about the client they’re all talking about their own little agendas. I’ve come out of meetings and thought ‘what about the client?’.” (Addaction, Durham)

3.2.2 Quality not Quantity

While it was suggested a greater number of service users would have been involved in the programmes with a better level of communication between agencies, the key workers emphasised that success should not be measured in terms of quantity alone. The true value of the initiative was experienced by the service users who turned up to each training session on a regular basis over the 8-week period.

“Roughly 20 clients attended the full 8 week programme. They benefited greatly from attending as they have improved fitness, mental health and of course better football skills. The programme was structured in such a way that the clients learnt a new skill each week. Those attending a few sessions would only benefit from what was taught in those sessions.” (De Paul Trust, Newcastle)

3.2.3 University

The universities involvement was seen as successful by both the key workers and the service users in every programme, and was regarded as central to the value and quality of the initiative.

“I honestly found the university students to be fantastic coaches; they planned everything in advance and were very motivated. They seemed to gel with the clients and grew in confidence weekly. The university is often seen as a place that only rich or very clever people go and working with students and playing on university facilities breaks these stereotypes down and shows the university to be a place where all are welcome.” (De Paul Trust, Newcastle)

“One of the very positive aspects of this project is the involvement of the university in the whole planning and delivery process. The university staff have been fantastic in their approach to the project. They dealt with a client group and subject matter that could have had major repercussions on the reputation of the university if things hadn’t gone so well.” (NECA, Darlington)

“The facilities within the university have been first class and I think that this shaped the behaviour of the clients; expectations of them were raised and they responded appropriately.” (NECA, Darlington)

Across the board the relationships developed between student coaches and service users was viewed as a positive factor within the initiative. Key workers saw that this had a range of beneficial effects for the service users such as provision of positive role models, encouraging interest in education and learning, and breaking down barriers of misconception.

“For the service users it’s been invaluable to work with such a switched on organisation and it has presented some opportunities which they otherwise may not have had.” (NECA, Darlington)

“There were no incidents. After the first week you could see the relationship growing between them. There was a non-authoritarian rapport which developed very quickly between the coaches and the service users. It was great to see. The university has been fantastic.” (Addaction, Durham)

“Some of our clients commented on the fact that once they were at the university and were training in their new kit they felt “different, accepted” part of something bigger than their individual daily routine.” (NECA, Darlington)

3.2.4 Care Plans

Care Plans are an integral part of an individual’s drug treatment provision. They are the means of recording a service user’s current needs and the agreed responses to those needs in terms of how they will be met, by whom and the desired outcome. Key workers were very clear that the use of sport and physical activity was an important element that should be included within care plans and an added value to their current treatment programmes.

“Sport as part of the care plan gave the project the right focus and the appropriate response within the process of Care Coordination / Offender Management. It challenged pre-conceived ideas around “just a footy game” as opposed to a real treatment. Some of our partners’ management were reluctant to acknowledge sport as a real treatment option and an opportunity for staff to engage with their clients outside the normal daily or weekly routine... The huge positive feedback from both clients and staff has begun to change these perceptions and even some of our medical colleagues are now asking “why can’t we roll it out to all clients”.” (NECA, Darlington)

“I see this as benefiting the clients in many ways. They integrate with their peers as well as professionals, build confidence, attend regular sessions, communicate with others, work as a team, learn how and when to encourage others and get fit. If it is part of the care plan they can talk about the benefits with their Key Workers and can see how behaviour changed when in a group or team situation and outside the agency. This may give key workers a better insight into their client.” (De Paul Trust, Newcastle)

“This is a structured intervention, Probation are saying that now too, it’s a structured intervention and it’s a good one. It’s part of their Care Plan because they’ve come out and done a social and structured activity with a regular attendance.” (Addaction, Durham)

Socializing throughout the programmes, both with other service users and with the student coaches was seen by key workers as one of the main benefits of the initiative.

“The way that they socialize has been completely different. Normally, if you get four or five lads in a group usually they’re huddled around and the only conversation is the gear, or where they’re going to go or who’s done what or whatever. Here they’re talking about picking teams and doing exercises together. And so there have been

maybe the same five lads that have known each other for years and this is the first time they've actually started to work as a team, play as a team and discuss things that they wouldn't want to discuss normally.” (Addaction, Durham)

“I see differences in people weekly...Clients who wouldn't mix with others due to lack of confidence now being involved with the group. This may be just down to a coach or peer saying ‘well done’, or maybe scoring a goal. Clients training for the weekly football session, encouraging others, wanting to know when the next set of training is and turning up an hour early in some cases. This shows that the group are motivated and want this to carry on. The best thing about the programme is when people speak to you at the end of a set programme and tell you that they can't come to the next programme as they are now volunteering and helping others to get there. Then you know it's made a difference.” (De Paul Trust, Newcastle)

When reflecting on what the best aspects of the programme were for the service users, a range of factors were identified by the key workers.

“For me there have been many positive outcomes from this project, the clients obvious improvement in attendance and a definite increase in the successful completions are there for all to see.” (NECA, Darlington)

“During the 8 weeks training and in the tournament there was no conflict or fighting. Everything was played with a good team spirit and attitude.” (De Paul Trust, Newcastle)

“Very often organisations can become focussed on their needs and the need to “get numbers into treatment or retain them in treatment”. What I like about this project is the fact that the client is definitely the centre point and we work to meet their needs. We have had to change the way we do certain things in order to make the project work for us but having done that we have become aware that the benefits outweigh the costs and we have all benefited from being involved in it.” (NECA, Darlington)

3.3 Summary

Evidencing the place of sport within current and future Care Plans, the key workers highlighted a range of benefits of the initiative including socializing, reduced levels of tensions, a more regular attendance and better relationships. A few had been dubious prior to involvement and viewed it as “a skive by other workers to play football” but even the most sceptical were won over by the impact of the initiative and in particular by successes with individuals deemed to have been the hardest and most resistant to engage in any type of drug treatment. In a number of areas individuals were cited as examples of the way sport had helped to engage with these individuals and begun to change their behaviour.

4. SERVICE USERS

Sport is a natural draw for many service users who remain interested in professional sport and have strong, positive memories of playing sport when much younger. It is therefore a positive attraction from the outset, but even for those for whom football and sport itself was not a strong initial draw, going through the programme highlighted a lot of other benefits.

“At first I wasn't sure about it when they came and asked me – I thought I wouldn't be fit enough and I wouldn't get into it, I thought I'd be different. But when I got there I loved it.”

4.1 Findings

A total of 95 individuals who attended the football coaching and played in the tournament completed a short questionnaire following the final event (see Appendix 3). These consisted of questions aimed primarily at capturing self-reported soft-outcomes such as feelings, hopes and intentions.

There were very positive responses about the effects of the programme and how participation had made them feel. Every participant said that they wanted to take part in any future programme.

	Durham (n=16)	Newcastle (n=23)	Teesside (n=35)	Northumbria (n=15)	Sunderland ¹ (n=6)	Total (n=95)	Total %
Fitter	16	11	19	10	5	61	64%
Healthier	13	11	22	12	2	60	63%
Happier	10	6	24	13	1	54	57%
More confident	13	5	17	13	5	53	56%
Tired	10	13	14	9	6	52	55%
Positive	14	11	12	11	1	49	52%
More energy	13	5	17	12		47	49%
Less stressed	9	9	13	12	3	46	48%
Proud	9	7	18	9	1	44	46%
Do more sports	9	7	10	14	3	43	45%
Sleep better	7	13	12	8	2	42	44%
Eat better	8	12	6	9	4	39	41%
Successful	9	7	13	4	1	34	36%
Relaxed	9	2	9	8		28	29%
Outgoing	9	2	7	10		28	29%
Organized	9	4	7	6		26	27%
In control	8	4	12			24	25%

When asked about other sports which they would like to participate in, they favoured:

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|------------------|
| * | Swimming | * | Rowing |
| * | Martial arts | * | Cricket |
| * | Boxing | * | Tennis |
| * | Weight lifting | * | Circuit training |
| * | Golf | * | Squash |
| * | Basketball | * | Rugby |

Focus groups and interviews were conducted with service users from three of the programmes. Discussions centred around five main questions: “what did you like?”, “what didn’t you like?”, “what could have been better?”, “why sport?” and “ideas for the future”. Participants discussed the programmes’ strengths and weaknesses, based upon their expectations and ideas, as well as their actual experiences throughout the programme. They also reflected on the wider impact they felt the programme had on their lives.

4.2 Advantages

Broadly these fell into nine areas.

4.2.1 Interaction and Diversion

The social interaction resulting from the programmes was highlighted as one of the greatest benefits. The service users felt that they gained enormously from meeting people outside of a “drugs context” as well as having something constructive to do with their time.

“With sports it gives you something to do, it keeps you off the streets instead of robbing places or taking drugs or anything like that. It’s interactive, and it gives you more opportunity to do things in the future.”

¹ Sunderland delivered an additional set of questionnaires (n=42) for their programme. Details can be found in Sunderland Report.

“Getting the service users together – and getting on well - a lot of the lads had been from prison and knew each other from inside - and it was nice to meet a few of the lads and that out of the prison, - it’s been over a year for me – and a couple of the lads were sayin ‘ah you alright! It’s good to see you!’ – So that’s one of the good strengths. Getting together, having a good day and spending time together in a positive way.”

“It gives you something to do, something worth spending your time on. Plus the fact that you’re meeting people all the time.”

4.2.2 Meeting people

Meeting people from a variety of backgrounds as well as other service users was also identified as one of the most important aspects.

“Gives you an opportunity to meet all different people and make all new friends, like we did in Durham.”

“We got to meet professional footballers as well so that was good. I was talking to a lot of the Darlington players and few Hartlepool players. The Darlington lot they offered us tickets to go up the matches and everything. I got the autographs but I got them for the kids. But I was still showing all my friends!”

“We don’t get invited to a lot of places and there’s never been anything like this before – specifically for our type.”

4.2.3 Structuring time

The service users identified the programme as something which helped them to structure their time more effectively throughout the week which in turn gave them something to focus on. In some areas this became a “full day” for the service users.

“With the Darlington lot, we all used to be here for 10a.m, we’d all have our dinner together just before we’d set off and then we’d go. So it was a full day for us lot. So we got to sit and have our dinners together before we set off.”

“A lot of us had had training when we were inside prison, and we’d had games and that, but when you’re out there’s been nothing and it leaves you bored and that’s dangerous. We haven’t had this opportunity before – in terms of competition – not the older people, yes the younger people, but not us”

“It was something that you planned ahead Thursday, it was like “oh Thursday – we’ve got sports that day.” Everyone was looking forward to it and nobody wanted to miss it.”

“It gave us something to look forward to each week. It was something to do and it was exciting.”

4.2.4 Opportunities and Association

The service users identified opportunities they thought the programme had given them. These included information and access to employment, the opportunity to be introduced to and experience more sports, and the chance to become aware of educational possibilities outlined by the students. By playing football on a regular basis some of the service users recalled positive childhood memories, reminding them of what they “used to do” when they were not involved in drug use and crime. This was referred to frequently throughout the focus groups indicating another positive element of the programme. All said that the programme had made them want to do more sports.

“I haven’t played since I was a kid and see I’ve always loved playing football...”

“It was an opportunity where we saw plaques up on walls of other leagues that are going on and when we asked the coaches and workers and that if we could get involved in other teams the answer was “course you can, get yourself a team and of

course you can.” They knew ‘what we were like’ and even the place knew – they still said you can - get a team together – you’re committed to playing – you can come.”

“We now know that you don’t have to be Pele, or Maradona or David Beckham – if we come we’ll get a game – no matter what. Anyone who was a service user was allowed to go.”

“Probably the best project I’ve ever heard of like. Definitely.”

“We are planning on continuing with the training – doing it on a Sunday and through the week going swimming and that and try and build up our stamina and that – there’s a lot of us wanting to do that.”

“I think now that you’ve had the first one, I think you’ll find there’ll be a lot more coming – I know for a fact there’s at least another 2-3 teams here – and that’s just the people we’ve spoken to. A lot of people that we’ve spoken to an’ that have been saying ‘oh – I wouldn’t mind doing a bit of that!’ – there are many more people in the system.”

“Coaching and training is something we really want to do.”

“It has made me want to do more sports, yeah, definitely. It’s opened up a whole load more opportunities.”

4.2.5 Improved relationships

When questioned, some service users identified that their family had viewed their participation in the training and tournament in a very positive light, and that this had been a benefit in terms of improving family relationships. They commented that having a medal to show their family, friends or partner made them feel proud whilst at the same time it was encouraging to the family members that they were involved in something other than drugs and drug related activities.

“It got to the point with me that I’m sick of having to phone the kids and explain I’m in prison again. It’s not fair on them. And even there they’re noticing how much I’ve changed because they say “oh she’s not poorly now anymore” – because before I used to wake up rattling and that...”

“I think the football was like breaking down barriers – through communication to society...a lot of society have got the idea that drug addicts equal bad which in turn means I don’t want anything to do with em..”

4.2.6 The Coaches

Feedback on the university student coaches was collectively positive. The service users remarked on a degree of surprise at this, and commented how this experience had changed their views in a positive way and helped to bridge a number of misconceptions.

“The coaches were good. They gave us a lot of respect.”

“ I thought they would’ve looked down at us because of our past.”

“The girl coaches were good as well. When we went to the gym they wrote a proper programme out for us and then they used to sit and have a bit of crack [conversation] with us before they went and then they’d pop in all the time to see if we were alright and that. So they were good.”

“I think they gave us a lot of respect actually, and I think that’s why it worked.”

“And I think it was good cos they were all about the same age group as us as well. I think we’ve all walked away with something like, definitely. I’m glad of the experience.”

“The coaches were really good... I was expecting them to be different, to be stuck up and up their own arses, I thought they would look at us different an’ that. But they didn’t - they were just the same as us we had a laugh with them and they were good at coaching it was like we did improve with them teachin’ us.”

Given that the coaches were very often younger than the service users and had a great deal less ‘life experience’, these comments show how well they managed to fulfil their roles as coaches. Giving and receiving respect are part of the coach/athlete relationship and within this the importance of encouragement from the coach can never be over-estimated.

‘All great successes, all great lives have involved the coincidence of aptitude, talent but also the luck of meeting people who have believed in you. At some point in your life you need someone who will tap you on the shoulder and say, “I believe in you”.’
Arsene Wenger, Manager, Arsenal Football Club

4.2.7 Physical and Psychological Gains

Although the programme itself was only one and a half to two hours a week over an 8-week period, the service users felt that their physical fitness and football skills had improved. In part this was due to the training sessions themselves but several service users also commented on the fact that as a result of the programme they had taken up additional sporting activities, including running and swimming. Others said they had reduced, or even given up smoking.

“The fitness and meeting all new people from all different areas. It was very poor at the start but we got fitter as the time went on.”

“I said not a chance I’m not doing it! Cos I don’t like football, but then when they said I can go in the gym and all, I said alright I’ll do that. I came to do the gym and that and then I ended up getting into football!”

Research studying the psychology of sport among a variety of individuals and circumstances have generally found that there is a positive relationship between changes in mood and engagement in physical exercise (Plante & Rodin, 1990). This has been supported by many projects including one study of 978 men and women of several personality and situational variables. The findings showed that it was specifically the regular exercisers who had higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of neuroticism, hostility and social inadequacy (Morris & Summers, 1995).

A range of psychological gains from the programme were identified including improvements in sleep, mood, and self-esteem. The evaluation feedback found 57% of the service users were happier, 56% more confident whilst 44% reported sleeping better as a result of participation in the sports programme.

Research studying the immediate after effects following exercise has also documented decreases in anxiety, depression, tension, and mental confusion as well as increases in vitality and high spirits (Horn, 1992; Berger & Owen, 1988; LaFontaine et al., 1992; Morgan, 1985; and Steptoe & Cox, 1989). In their evaluation feedback, 52% of drug users said that they felt more positive and 48% felt less stressed as result of participation in the programme. A sense of satisfaction was emphasised by all the service users.

“We went back an’ told our mates and showed our medals saying “look I’ve done this – and it was good and at the end of it we got to do a competition. Something came of it.”

“I was glad of the opportunity to do it. Aye totally. And I’d do it again, I’d snap it up with both hands.”

4.2.8 Teamwork

It was hoped that the programme would help individuals to learn team skills and experience the rewards of working together with others. Winning and losing through sports can be a valuable tool to help individuals learn to deal with success and failure (Phillips, 1993). Bailey (1997) noted that in sports and activity (albeit with reference to schools) attitudes, values, norms, roles and skills are similar to those

found in adult work activities. Following the football the vast majority of individuals were keen to be involved in further training and tournaments, indicating that despite not necessarily winning, value in the experience had been gained.

“When you play as a team it helps you, and it helps you interact with each other and it helps you talk to each other. And it gives you confidence.”

“We’ve been through different gyms and programmes but nothing like this before. I think through this we’ve all pulled together and been encouraging each other. And being in a team it makes you play better as well.”

“Even when we were warming up and stuff like that, you might not be good at one thing or as good as the next player but in a team it gives you the confidence and it makes you a better player.”

“Team working gave people the opportunity to learn to work together. And there was good sportsmanship - at the end everybody shook hands no matter where anybody had come.”

4.2.9 Crime Reduction

The over-riding aim of the Drug Interventions Programme is crime reduction. Evidence from service users and key workers suggests that offending did reduce as part of the improved treatment effectiveness that the Sports initiative promoted. A crime impact assessment was undertaken on a group of 22 drug users who attended one of the sports coaching programmes. These were individuals who were already in treatment and involved with the Drug Interventions Programme, with the attendant gains that these interventions had already brought in health, crime reduction, etc. The research showed that those who attended every session of the coaching course reduced their offending by 42% in the 11 months following the first training session, whilst those who attended only some of the sessions reduced their offending by only 17%. It is not possible to attribute the crime reduction gains to this programme alone but it does nevertheless suggest the important part that the coaching courses can play in terms of behavioural change, especially crime reduction and re-emphasises the importance of a holistic package of care that is needed to achieve this.

4.3 Areas for Improvement

There were a number of areas in which frustrations were felt or where it was thought that improvements could be made. Some of these were simply a matter of resources and logistics but the comments do still demonstrate the hopes and aspirations of the individuals concerned.

4.3.1 Restriction in number and length of sessions

The fact that the sessions only ran one day per week for an eight week period was seen as insufficient in many participants’ eyes.

“It should be more often. Not just once a week. It should be an ongoing thing. It should be twice or three times a week.”

“Could it not be an ongoing thing? We could go there and they can let different coaches train us - change them every 8 weeks if they want to. As long as we go together.”

4.3.2 Limited number of participants

Given the size of some geographical areas, the number of potential participants and the numbers involved could be greater.

“And the more people we can get in as well. Because then you’ve got more ideas, and when you’ve got more ideas the better it gets. That’s what we want - imagine if there were loads more of us.”

4.3.3 Uncommitted Service Users

Frustrations were voiced regarding the few service users who turned up at the first session, were allocated kit, and then did not come back.

"I just don't see why them people came and picked up the strips and that and just nicked off you know what I mean? When you get more out of staying there than what you're gonna get just from the strip."

4.3.4 Other Sports

The pilot coaching programmes and tournaments concentrated on football though there were options for other sports which the small number of women participants took up.

"We'd like to do more sports in the next projects. They were talking about doing taster sessions - rock-climbing, canoeing, rowing, anything like that I'll do owt me. It gets you out and about doesn't it."

4.4 Why Sport?

The service users placed a great deal of emphasis on the benefits they considered sport brought about for them as individuals. Broadly, the reason fell into six categories: sport motivates; it makes those involved less inclined to use drugs; it increases energy; it helps individuals to structure time and feel organized; it develops a sense of well being and it can be used as tool to engage other drug users in a positive activity.

"It gets you healthy doesn't it - it gets you involved, and it keeps you moving."

"It makes you feel better about yourself and sleep and want to eat and it makes you feel normal. It makes you think you've done something worthwhile, it's good."

"Say if you rubbish at a sport but the person you're working with is bang on it then you're learning something new."

"Keeps your mind occupied."

"I've only ever really had the chance to use a gym and that's not really a sport is it."

"It gets you out and about and it lets you meet new people. And it's healthy- and that's the main thing."

"It builds your confidence up, it helps keep you motivated and busy, it's dangerous being bored."

"It gets you off the streets as well."

"It gives you a better aspect on life. Cos it makes you think twice about what just you're doing already. Makes you think why sit there and waste your time getting high all the time when you can go out and do better things and meet other people."

"It's interactive and it gets you out and meeting new people and talking to more people and when you do sports it welcomes other things and new things. It builds on more sports and bigger sports and you can get qualifications out of it."

"We just wanted to play football and the kit and the trainers an that – most of us had never had owt like that – we'd of played anyway but this made us feel sorted. It made the whole thing more official - and we took it seriously because everyone else did, plus you could play better an' there were less injuries. Aye we would of played anyway - but the kit made a difference."

4.5 Summary

The service users described a range of positive and negative aspects they felt had an impact on them as a result of the sports programmes. They also considered and discussed in detail the impact they felt sport had on them in terms of their own rehabilitation. The following areas were identified:

Advantages

- Positive memories playing sport generated;
- Meeting people, both with similar and different backgrounds;
- Socializing on a regular basis in a positive context;
- Constructive use of time;
- Diversion from boredom;
- Improvements in fitness;
- Improvements in sleep;
- Improvements in appetite;
- Improvements in diet and awareness;
- Increased sense of well being;
- Sense of satisfaction and achievement;
- Insight into education and information;
- Information and access / routes to employment;
- Qualifications;
- New sports;
- New activities;
- New opportunities.

Disadvantages

- Limitations of sports in pilot programmes;
- Restrictions in time and number of sessions;
- Limited number of players involved;
- Other service users taking kit.

Sport as a part of Rehabilitation

- Decreases the inclination to use drugs;
- Motivates the individual;
- Increases energy;
- Makes participants feel organized;
- Develops a sense of well being;
- Serves as a vehicle to engage other service, and non service drug users in the programme and treatment.

"I had not taken part in any fitness training for a while and my fitness levels were pretty poor, and I wasn't that motivated in doing anything about it, the football coaching not only helped me to develop my skills and stamina, but gave me that motivation to carry this on, I have now found employment and moved into my own accommodation and I now regularly play football once a week in a local 5 a side league." (Service User)

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion the initiative has confirmed that sport can provide a highly effective and attractive mechanism for the delivery of drug rehabilitation. However it has also been highlighted that the relationship between drug rehabilitation and sport can be problematic and that great care needs to be taken in putting together such initiatives. Principally:

1. Sport programmes should be developed in partnership with drug service agencies and universities.
2. Sports programmes must be sustained, long lasting and where possible linked to realistic training and employment opportunities.
3. The coaching programme is the change agent, not the tournament at the end of it. The tournament may serve as an incentive and a motivator but tournaments alone and one-off sporting events cannot deliver any of the gains that programmes as a whole can manage.

4. The provision of sporting activity must fit within Care Plans and take place within the broader framework of personal development.
5. It is important to be aware of the negative effects that football can sometimes induce among players such as aggression or antagonism resulting from competition and /or failure. Good risk management and planning meant that there were no violent incidents or confrontations in any of the programme areas to date.
6. Funding needs to be secure and adequate to meet the programme costs. In the light of the transport costs for some large catchment areas, funding was not considered sufficient to maximise the potential of programmes. A review of organisation and logistics around the delivery of transport throughout programmes can help to reduce costs considerably.
7. It is crucial that the place of the initiative within universities is always monitored and continually assessed to ensure all participants in the programmes are fully supported and basic ground rules are always adhered to.

This initiative has demonstrated very clearly the valuable part that sport can play within drug rehabilitation and the wider health improvement agenda. For some reason sports interventions for adults have been under-utilised in favour of programmes for young people; this initiative showed that sport can be equally effective as a change agent for adults. This report looked at programmes which concentrated on football coaching, which, whilst popular is not to everyone's taste. Although some individuals on the programmes accessed a range of other sporting activities the indications are that it is engagement in sporting programmes in general that bring the gains, not one particular sport in favour of another. The scope for developing programmes around all these other sports is almost limitless as is their capacity to change lives.

“Sport has an invaluable role to play in improving the health and well-being of communities. It can make individuals healthier and communities more vibrant, by reducing health inequalities, lowering long-term unemployment, cutting crime, and delivering better qualifications, but also by developing pride among individuals, strengthening community spirit, and empowering communities so that they are able to run regeneration programmes themselves”.

(Rt Hon Richard Caborn MP, Minister for Sport and Tourism)

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Appendix 1

Overview of Programme Areas

- Newcastle University / Newcastle DIP
 - May 2005
 - 8 students;
 - 50 service users;
 - 7 agencies (Cyrenians, PPO, ICCP, Escape, Phoenix House, NECA, SILS).
- Teesside University / Hartlepool DIP, Stockton DIP, Middlesbrough DIP
 - Round 1: October 2005
 - 3 students;
 - 50 service users;
 - 4 agencies (Lifeline, NACRO (Pathways), Addaction, Addvance).
 - Round 2: February 2006
 - 2 students;
 - 30 service users;
 - 4 agencies (as above);
 - *10 service users have since achieved FA level 1 coaching qualifications.*
- Sunderland University / Sunderland DIP, South Tyneside DIP
 - March 2006
 - 2 students;
 - 140 service users (engaged in sporting activity) Of this 96 were involved in 8-week programme with student coaches;
 - 9 agencies (Voice, NECA South Tyneside, NECA Sunderland, Addaction, Phoenix House, YMCA, Turning Point, Arrest Referral, DISC);
 - *7 service users have since achieved FA level 1 coaching qualifications .*

Uniquely Sunderland DIP have a full time sports development post which is located within the Local Authorities sports department. This has allowed a greater diversity of sports and health activities to be offered and developed in the area.

- Northumbria University / Newcastle DIP, Gateshead DIP, North Tyneside DIP
 - Round 1: May 2006
 - 5 students;
 - 45 service users;
 - 6 agencies (Lifeline, NECA, Cyrenians, ESCAPE, Northumbria probation, DISC).
 - Round 2: August 2006
 - 2 students;
 - 45 service users;
 - 5 agencies (as above);
 - *13 service users are due to commence FA level 1 coaching qualification courses in October 2006.*
- Durham University / Durham DIP, Darlington DIP
 - May 2006
 - 14 students;
 - 45 service users;
 - 5 agencies (Addaction, NECA, Probation (DRR and PPO), Lifeline, DISC);
 - *3 service users are currently undergoing FA level 1 coaching qualifications.*

Appendix 2

Student Coach Questionnaire

(Sessions 1 – 4 and 4 – 8)

1. What are you hoping to gain from this experience? e.g. qualification, confidence, leadership skills.

.....
.....
.....

2. My initial feelings when I was told about the client group I would be coaching were positive.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Any other

comments.....
.....

3. I felt that I was well briefed prior to coaching this client group.

- Agree
- Disagree

Any other comments.....

4. I feel supported and able to ask the appropriate people any questions /concerns that I have.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Any other

comments.....
.....

5. Before meeting the offenders I felt apprehensive.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Any other

comments.....
.....

6. Before each training session so far I have felt positive.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Any other

comments.....
.....

7. I find it easy to communicate with my team.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Appendix 3

Participant Questionnaire

1. Which organisation are you from?

2. How has the 8-week football training and tournament made you feel?

Positive Healthier More confident Happier

Fitter Successful Relaxed Eat better

Organised Less stressed Outgoing Tired

In control Proud Want to do more sports

Sleep better Given me more energy

Any other?.....

3. Would you like to take part in the next football tournament?

Yes No Maybe

4. What other sports would you like to take part in?

5. Do you mind being contacted again about this project?

Yes No (name)

Thanks for your time.