



**Widening  
Access**

## **CASE STUDY**

### **WHITECHAPEL SPORTS CENTRE**

### **WHITECHAPEL, EAST LONDON**

#### **WHAT DID WE DO?**

Whitechapel Sports Centre is an award-winning, multi-purpose facility in the heart of East London offering a wide range of community sporting opportunities. Since 2004 the centre, comprising a four-court sports hall, health and fitness suite and multi-use games area, has been managed by experienced leisure management contractors Greenwich Leisure Ltd. The Centre has been central to raising local participation levels and maximising accessibility by ensuring that the building and activities offered reflect the needs of the diverse and vibrant local communities in Whitechapel.

Sport England provided a Lottery Fund award of just over £1.2 million towards the construction of the Centre. The facility opened in November 1998 at a total project cost of £2.1 million. The availability of Sport England Lottery Funding was crucially important in leveraging other partnership funding and the outcomes have been a tremendous success.

#### **WHAT WERE THE RESULTS?**

- Overall participation has increased across all areas, with throughput of around 14,000 per month (around 168,000 per annum).
- Many areas of Whitechapel are recognised as economically deprived. The pricing policy has therefore been carefully designed to minimise the degree to which cost becomes a barrier to participation. For example, 'Pay & Play' membership is free to residents of LB Tower Hamlets, enabling use of the facilities at often little or no cost removing a key barrier to regular participation.
- Whitechapel Sports Centre offers a range of activities provided specifically for women, which have proved hugely popular. The facilities include a women-only fitness room, studio and women only access to the Centre is provided on a weekly basis. The on-site crèche gained OFSTED approval in 2005 and is opened to coincide with the women-only sessions, again aiding accessibility and increasing participation.
- A rebound therapy session is held once per week for people with disabilities. This is also well attended with around 30 visits per month from participants.
- The Centre hosts a Healthy Lifestyles Referral Scheme coordinated through the Council's Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator, with six sessions per week. Those completing the referral course are offered reduced membership rates.
- The BEST Child Obesity programme hosted at the Centre is also coordinated by the Council's Healthy Lifestyles department and provides opportunities for young people to take part in physical activity through diet information and activity sessions.
- The centre plays host to a number of targeted social inclusion programmes and is a venue for the Street League providing sporting and education opportunities for unemployed, homeless and people with drug and alcohol problems using the power of sport to make positive changes to many people's lives.