

Case Study

Hirst Welfare

Neighbourhood
renewal and
community safety

What were our objectives?

To engage the residents of a former mining community in sport and physical activity



Project description

Sport England awarded Hirst Welfare Trust £548,000 through the Active England programme. The total project cost £648,000. The funding split was:

- £458,340 (capital) towards a new gym facility; and
- £89,668 (revenue) to employ a health and fitness development worker.

The project started in 2005 and Active England funding is now finished. The health and fitness development worker post is now funded through Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme and the Hirst Welfare Trust.

Project aims

- To extend the Hirst Welfare building and football pitches opened in 2004; and
- To ensure the local community use the facilities.

Rationale

The new gym is built on the site of the old community centre which was demolished in 1990. Hirst Welfare is a 'one stop shop' for community health and fitness. The Coalfields Taskforce, formed after a needs assessment by the local council, identified that residents should have access to community health and fitness, 'one stop shops.'

Project performance

The centre has:

- Attracted 2,616 participants, up from 1,879 in 2007;
- 40% of participants were new to sport;
- A total throughput of 122,235;
- Used 65 coaches and instructors, all from the immediate deprived community; and
- Offered work placements for young people on New Deal.

Good Practice

Community focus

During the original feasibility and development work, there was consultation with the local community. This enabled a focus on designing the building around activities that local people wanted.

All volunteers and instructors are recruited from the local community, mostly from the local college. Being familiar faces to residents, they give the centre a friendly, welcoming atmosphere.

Financial management

To ensure the centre is sustainable, income is generated from sources such as sessional room hire, rents for office space, individuals paying to take part in activities, grants for specific projects and staff salaries, income from the café and catering, income from users of the gym and the pitch, rental income from groups using the dance studio and donations. The four key sources of income are the gym and associated activities, football, catering and room hire.

Development worker and delivery team

The Active England revenue budget funded a health and fitness development worker. The original post holder appointed was not successful. The job description was subsequently changed to place a greater emphasis on development work and the current post holder has been more successful at the job.

Volunteers and instructors come from the local community. They are regular gym users and therefore familiar faces to participants from the local community.

What's next?

Currently a lot of work is being done in schools around kids clubs and basketball. The centre now offers cheerleading and street dance during the school holidays. The overall aim is to base activities around kids who will then use the gym as adults or whose parents will use the gym whilst waiting.

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