



# Closing the Gap

Closing the Gap Volume 1, Issue 1, Autumn 2007



## MJ Achievement Award Winners 2007

During 2005-6 Closing the Gap (CtG) worked closely with the City Councils residential provision for looked after children to address extremely low levels of participation in sport and physical activity. A detailed evaluation of this work showed that it had been extremely successful in facilitating fundamental cultural changes and had successfully unlocked the potential of sport and physical activity for achieving key

organisational goals. The work undertaken resulted in vastly improved opportunities for the young people involved to take part in and benefit from regular participation in sport and physical activity.

The success of CtG's work with the residential units was nationally recognised in June 2007 at a gala dinner at the Hilton Hotel in London, where it was announced that CtG had beaten over fifty other local authorities from across the UK to win the Municipal Journals prestigious Promoting Active Communities Achievement of the Year Award for 2007.

Andrew Heaward  
CtG Programme Manager



Andrew Heaward and Carl Bennett with Graham Farrant of Leisure Connection, receiving the award from BBC Presenter Andrew Marr.

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The Closing the Gap Team, 2007

**"It has been a very worthwhile project that has an impact on the young people and culture in the units. Not only this, staff have benefited from this not only at work but also in their personal life."**

**Julie Lewis**  
Head of Residential Care Department  
2005-6

## CtG research indicates our young people are becoming more active!

Thanks to all who assisted with this years Closing the Gap survey, examining levels of participation in sport and physical activity by young people at risk of social exclusion. The following graphs indicate

that participation levels have increased this year amongst those young people at risk of social exclusion in Stoke-on-Trent. The survey shows a rise in both the mean levels of participation and

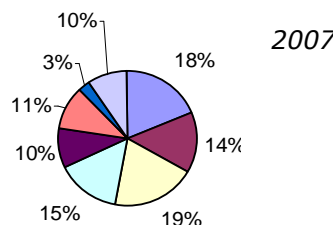
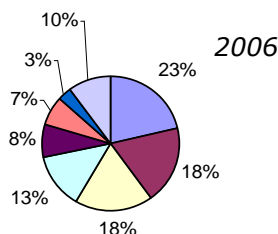
the number participating at least once per week, so all that hard work is starting to show rewards!

Stephanie Tooth  
CtG Research Officer

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Legend: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Number of days participation in a typical week

## North Staffs Young Carers Summer Sports Festival

Over two Saturdays in August a total of 40 Young Carers had the opportunity to take part in a summer sports festival at the Wallace Sport and Education Centre, Abbey Hulton.



The sports event was tailored to the choices of sports made by Young Carers beforehand. Both staff and young people were active in a variety of sport and physical activities for over 3 hours.



Well done to all the North Staffs Young Carers and staff that took part. The group of young people are now on their way to achieving their 'Be Healthy' & 'Enjoy and Achieve' Stoke Youth Awards.

The fun, action packed festival included;

- Football
- Cricket
- Tennis
- Basketball
- Badminton
- Table tennis
- Dodgeball
- Dance
- Ten pin bowling

*"I've enjoyed making new friends" Young Carer 9yrs*

The Young Carers evaluated the session and the majority thought the day was brilliant! They had enjoyed everything, made new friends, felt healthier and some even asked if they could do the same tomorrow!

*Stephanie Fletcher*

*CtG Youth Team Co-ordinator*



## Staff Training, 'Using Sport as a Tool' course

Congratulations to the 15 Young Carers staff who successfully completed this two day sports training course. Staff now feel confident using sport in their roles and to develop and plan the use of physical activity in their work. Six staff would now like to progress on to Community Sports Leaders Awards Tutor training so they can accredit Young Carers leadership in sport. The course has also ignited the interest of staff in their personal lives and several have increased their participation outside of work.



The course content included:

- Benefits of sport and physical activity and how to break down barriers in sport
- Getting set up: session planning and evaluation, and risk management
- What to deliver: ice breakers, games, sports rules and exercising at home
- Working in partnership with leisure facilities and sports clubs
- The Recreation Key card scheme
- Accreditation schemes for young people.

*Stephanie Fletcher*

*CtG Youth Team Co-ordinator*

The 'Using Sport as a Tool' training helped Young Carers staff to gain the skills/knowledge and more importantly the confidence to lead a wider variety of sports activities at their clubs/groups. This has been extremely beneficial because it has helped staff to build positive relationships with Young Carers and be a positive role model through their own participation. The training also helped the Department to recognise the skills and experience that the team members have that could be utilised during sessions. Besides this, the training itself was enjoyed by all and was a wonderful day for team building.

*Nicky Willis*

*Young Carers Senior Worker and Sports Champion*

"The involvement that we have had with Closing The Gap has enriched the structure that we have in place for sports/activities. Through staff training and the champions at each session, it has helped to introduce more of a variety to the activities that we previously planned for the Clubs/groups by helping staff members to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to maintain this. Closing the Gap has helped the Young Carers Department to source new venues for groups and helped us to re-look at the methods used to employ new staff and future project proposals. The Closing the Gap team have had a very positive impact on Young Carers and Staff alike".

*Nicky Willis*

*Young Carers Senior Worker and Sports Champion*



## Port Vale Football Club Community Engagement Scheme

This exciting new scheme is run by Closing the Gap (CtG) in partnership with the Federation of Stadium Communities (FSC) and Port Vale Football club (PVFC).

The scheme also involves many of Port Vale's constituent organisations, including Valiants Against Racism, Football in the Community and The Volunteers Group.



Port Vale and FSC share an aim to increase the community's involvement in the club. The research carried out by CtG with young people from the area showed young people had a

limited sense of ownership or understanding of Port Vale. The volunteer scheme aims to give people an opportunity to give something back to the club and support them in their volunteering within the club.

The second strand of the scheme involves training volunteers interested in sports as Community Sports Leaders through the Community Sports Leaders Awards (CSLA) course. When they are fully trained they will lead free sports sessions at local youth organisations. Volunteers will work in teams with a volunteer co-ordinator for each team organising sessions and timetables.

There are already two people regularly volunteering for Port Vales Football in the Community Initiative and another four willing to volunteer

on one off events at the club. A recruitment drive for the new season is being planned with the aim to eventually have around 20 sports volunteers trained and working in the community.

By the end of this football season we hope to have four teams of sports volunteers working around the north of the city with five volunteers in each team.



*Ruth Stainton  
CtG PC Programme Champion*

## Blackfriars Day Centre Get Sporty



weekly sports session. So far young

We are supporting Blackfriars Day Centre team to establish a regular

people have participated in basketball, hockey, tennis, gymnastics, golf, athletics, skittles, sailing and bowls.

A number of



young people are working towards their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh physical activity access credit award.

*David Hardwick  
CtG Programme Champion*

## Student Union commits to developing sport

Over the last twelve months two sports leader's award courses have been run at Staffordshire Universities Stoke campus by the Student Union with a total of 19 young people taking part. Candidates have been volunteering as part of the course at a wide variety of places including: Treehouse Children's Centre, YMCA, Stoke ABC, West Street Sports Academy, NORSACA youth club,

Stoke City



Football Club and Blackfriars Day Centre.

This year the Flying Start event at the Students Union included a sport and physical activity talk included for local prospective students. This aimed to help them understand the benefits of sport, the recommended exercise levels, and the local opportunities available. The talk also helped to raise awareness of the discounts students can benefit from within the city.

*David Hardwick  
CtG Programme Champion*



Sports leadership training is also flourishing in other places with a sports leaders award course run at the Wallace Centre being well attended by staff and clients at Blackfriars Day Centre, Port Vale FC volunteers and staff from Kingsland's Children's Centre. The group have bonded very well and are all picking up ideas from each another.

## Treehouse Children's Centre gets active

In April 2007 CtG met with the staff and the parents at the Treehouse Children's Centre explaining how we could support them to make better use of sport and physical activity. Staff expressed an interest in aerobics, so an instructor was booked. They have enjoyed it so much they now have a regular session every Thursday for



45 minutes.

Two football sessions have also been set up; a dads team which runs every Thursday and on Mondays a football session for local young people. Both have been a huge success reaching people who would generally not have participated without this opportunity. Over the last few months work has also started to support stay & play programmes in the Bentilee area. This work will aim to support parents and their children to participate in physical



activity through playing together. This is very important, because it helps develop a strong bond between parent and child and encourages both to understand and develop a healthier lifestyle.

*Derek Herbert  
CtG Programme Champion*

# Sports Volunteers Wanted!

Chelsey 23yrs, Sport Youth Worker and Volunteer

*"Sport has been invaluable for me growing up, so I would like the opportunity to offer youngsters the same opportunity that I had. Sport has given me confidence, made me a healthy person and given me chance to meet a broad range of people and travel the world."*

Chelsey's background in football: Arsenal Women's Academy 2000-02, Sports Scholar at Loughborough University, Captain Birmingham County & attended the Centre of Excellence.



## THE FACTS in ENGLAND

- 6 million sports volunteers
- 26% volunteers volunteer in sport
- 44 % young volunteers (18 – 24)
- One billion hours contributed each year
- Worth £14 billion in paid time
- Equivalent to ...720,000 paid workers

'Sports Volunteering in England 2002'

The Leisure Industries Research Centre, Sheffield

**We are looking for motivated and committed volunteers from all walks of life to support the functions of our team and give their time to partner organisations using sport and physical activity with young people. If you would like to meet new people, learn new skills, receive free sports related training, then get in touch with us for a chat about our volunteering opportunities.**

**Andrew Heaward**  
**CtG Programme Manager**  
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## 11th International Research Conference 2007 Dilemmas for Human Services, University of Lulea Sweden

A recent and very exiting development for CtG has been an invitation to attend and present a paper focusing on the innovative approach being taken to enhance the use of sport & physical activity within a wide range of public services who work with socially excluded/at risk young people. The conference involved presentations on a wide range of topics within the theme of "dilemmas of identity, new public management and governance". The conference was attended by around 100 academics drawn from universities across the world, including places such as Malaysia, Brunei, Portugal, Finland, Norway, the UK and of course Sweden. The CtG presentation was very well received and lasted a total of about 45 minutes including questions. The session focused on the work done as part of the social care pilot project and what was achieved in terms of both informing the programme's future work and ways in which others organisations can learn from the programme. A short paper will be prepared to expand on the points made in the presentation and will be published in the conference proceedings. It is also possible that this may feature in a special edition of one of the major sociology journals sometime in the next twelve months.

**"Innovation and Sustainability in addressing Social Exclusion through sport."**

**Andrew Heaward**  
**CtG Programme Manager**