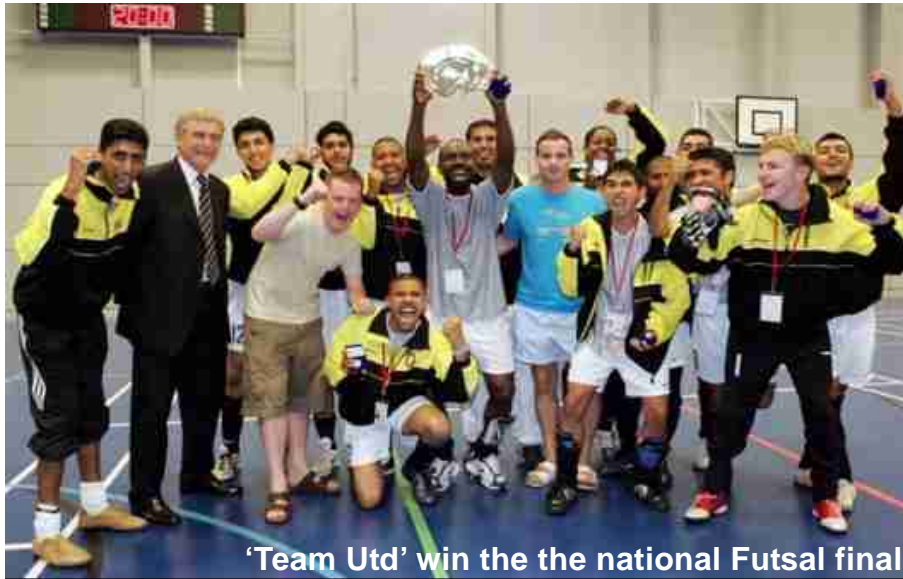


Leveling the playing field

How StreetGames is tackling community cohesion



'Team Utd' win the the national Futsal final

People from black and minority ethnic communities participate in sport less than the national average.

Among the young it's even worse, 32% of white 16 to 34 year olds participating regularly in sport compared to 22% of Black and Minority Ethnic 16 to 34 year olds. We need to address the exclusion of black and minority ethnic communities from sport, the question is how?

StreetGames believes that the first step is to listen. Different communities have different needs and those needs have to be built into any practical programme for it to succeed.

StreetGames is building a great track record in listening to communities and building programmes which widen participation in sport. These programmes are moving hard to reach groups closer to the mainstream of sport and making great strides in building greater community cohesion.

Whilst we're making this happen on the ground the government is also realising the potential of sport to promote community cohesion. David Miliband, the Home Secretary,

commented:

"Sport should be a great unifier. Up until 2012 we should be aiming to reduce to zero the number of people who play only with and against people of their own race and religion. Get it right, and the legacy from the Olympics will not just be medals, or sporting infrastructure, or regeneration in East London, or a positive image abroad, but vital bridges between communities who have used sport to promote tolerance and understanding"

StreetGames is working to build sport and cohesion across the UK. One very successful project is in East Birmingham, where StreetGames is working in partnership with Comm:Pact, a dynamic community group with Muslim origins. Massod Yasin, of Comm:Pact comments:

'Tensions are increasing amongst BME communities, but the solutions can be simple. Whilst many projects are output and tickbox driven, we need to take a step back and explore creative approaches of engagement and create a sense of belonging amongst diverse communities'

Comm:Pact and StreetGames have used 'Futsal', the adapted indoor football sport, to successfully engage young people and to start breaking down barriers. All players are treated with respect and are chosen for teams by their qualities, not their colour or communal identity. Masood added:

'We have engaged over 250 players from so many backgrounds, including Nigerian, Indian, Pakistani, Kashmiri, Bengali, Ghanaian, Congo, Somalian, Algerian, Iranian, Moroccan, Jewish, English, and Welsh. Our engagement strategy is again simple; we know the community and we use our networks to talk to people and to pass the information on. After that, the power of sport takes over!'

Another area with a very mixed community is West Bromwich, in the Greets Green New Deal for Communities area, there is a 44% ethnic mix with ethnicities ranging from Bangladeshi to Polish and Yemeni. Rus Smith leads the UEFA Hattrick project in the area, which is a partner of StreetGames. The project was set up in 2005 to engage people with football and sport using West Bromwich Albion Football Club as a vehicle. Rus says:

'We were told urban myths such as that people from minority ethnic backgrounds won't travel and will only stay within their community and that due to this our project would never work. However, we've reached over 2000 young people and 500 adults of all ethnicities in all parts of the borough. We did this by employing local people, gaining the trust of the young people, and by delivering a service that is popular and run professionally.'

'There are prejudices and preconceptions out there about geographical boundaries, cultural and ethnic identities but a well planned and delivered local sports provision can overcome all of these and deliver doorstep sport for all.'

For more information on these issues and how StreetGames is tackling them goto www.streetgames.org.

If you would like to join us in using sport to build and strengthen communities give us a call on 020 7261 1430.

Letter from Gerry Sutcliffe MP, Minister for Sport



Getting more people participating in sport is one of the government's priorities and engaging young people in sport plays a key role in creating a culture of sustained adult participation. With the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games just five years away, programmes

like StreetGames can play an important role in helping to take sport into the inner cities and outlying estates.

I'm delighted to hear that the recent tournaments in the North West, West Midlands and the North East were a great success, getting many young people involved in sport.

I look forward to hearing about more StreetGames events - including the winter tournaments in the South East, the East Midlands and London.

Through building on the success of these tournaments and the commitment of the StreetGames volunteers I am sure that by next summer there will be an even stronger network of neighbourhood projects taking part in StreetGames tournaments in every region of the country.