

# Sportivate Oswestry Substance Misuse

*Case Study*  
*December 2014*



Target: to engage 6 'hard to reach' participants in 6 weeks of football sessions

The project has been described as innovative and inspirational by the Head of Young People's Services because research suggests that bringing substance misusers together in a group can be detrimental to their rehabilitation and can present a captive audience for buying and selling drugs. This project broke all the rules and proved that sport can bring together hard to reach individuals, engaging them in physical activity rather than substance misuse.



**Working in Partnership...** In April 2014 a partnership was formed between Shropshire Council's Young People's Substance Misuse Team, Oswestry Boys and Girls Football Club and Shropshire Council's Sports Development Team, who together organised a football project for young men aged 14 – 25 years old.



## Why did the project start?

- 6 young men who were receiving support for substance misuse identified football as an activity they would like to take part in to avoid meeting to use drugs
- All participants were either heavily involved with cannabis use, the criminal justice system or known to social care and the family solutions team
- They were also all excluded from mainstream education, unemployed and came from low income families
- 36% of drug use takes place in the home; initiating a football project would hopefully encourage the young men out of the house to take part in sport improving long term physical and mental well-being.

## Their barriers...

### Time & Day

Sessions took place Thursdays 6-7pm. Prior to the project participants did not take part in any structured activities, because they were out of mainstream education and unemployed. It took a lot of encouragement from their case worker prior to the first session but participants fell into a routine and turned up on their own accord after this.

### Formal Sporting Offers

Despite encouragement to join local sports clubs, the boys would not attend due to their levels of social exclusion and because they have not taking part in a formal sporting activity for so long. They are much more likely to turn up for 1 hour every Thursday evening.

### Lack of Support

The participants needed encouragement to take part because they generally didn't receive any at home. Their case worker experiences a 'they can't do that' attitude from parents and guardians.



### Venue

The Marches School in Oswestry, an easily accessible town location, within walking distance of where the participants live.

### Clothing

The majority of the young men did not have money to pay for kit, they received a training t-shirt to encourage them to continue taking part and to create team-spirit.

### Cost

Participants were from low income families. Rather than providing for free, 50p per person per session was charged so that some value was attached to the project. This also demonstrated commitment from the participants, some paid for sessions in advance.

# Success

All 6 participants were **engaged** in all of the sessions

Participants became **more active, living a healthier lifestyle** and fitness levels of improved dramatically by the 6th week.

Two of the young men **entered treatment** as a result, and another is going on to do a coaching qualification.

*One participant was particularly disengaged to begin with but put a lot into the sessions, I think got a lot out of them as well.*

*Another participant acted as a role model to the others, even though he is very different outside the sessions. I would even identify him as a potential future leader/coach of the sessions*

*I could see that all of the participants really benefitted from positive structured activity. They were really were a team, they arrived and left together.*

*Everyone was involved in the games even if they weren't getting along between them*



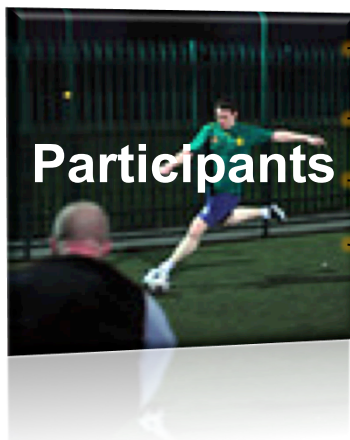
Coach

## Case worker

*I did have worries that getting a group of people together with substance misuse problems could have negative consequences but the project was successful because it provided them with structure activity and positive/supportive/firm influence of the coach was so important. The sessions provided structure, fun, encouragement, positive relations, positive activities and team spirit! A reintroduction to mainstream sport for all participants.*

*One participant had not been involved in any main stream sporting activity for many years. There was some animosity amongst the group but he acted as a peace keeper and smoothed the situation over – a positive role model.*

*Another participant was not one of the original 6 identified, but through taking part in the project recognised that he needed to change his behaviour and has since started working with the substance misuse team. The project provided a comfortable environment to address behaviours and some of my current clients were there to provide a 'She's alright' testimonial.*



*Realised how much I missed sport*

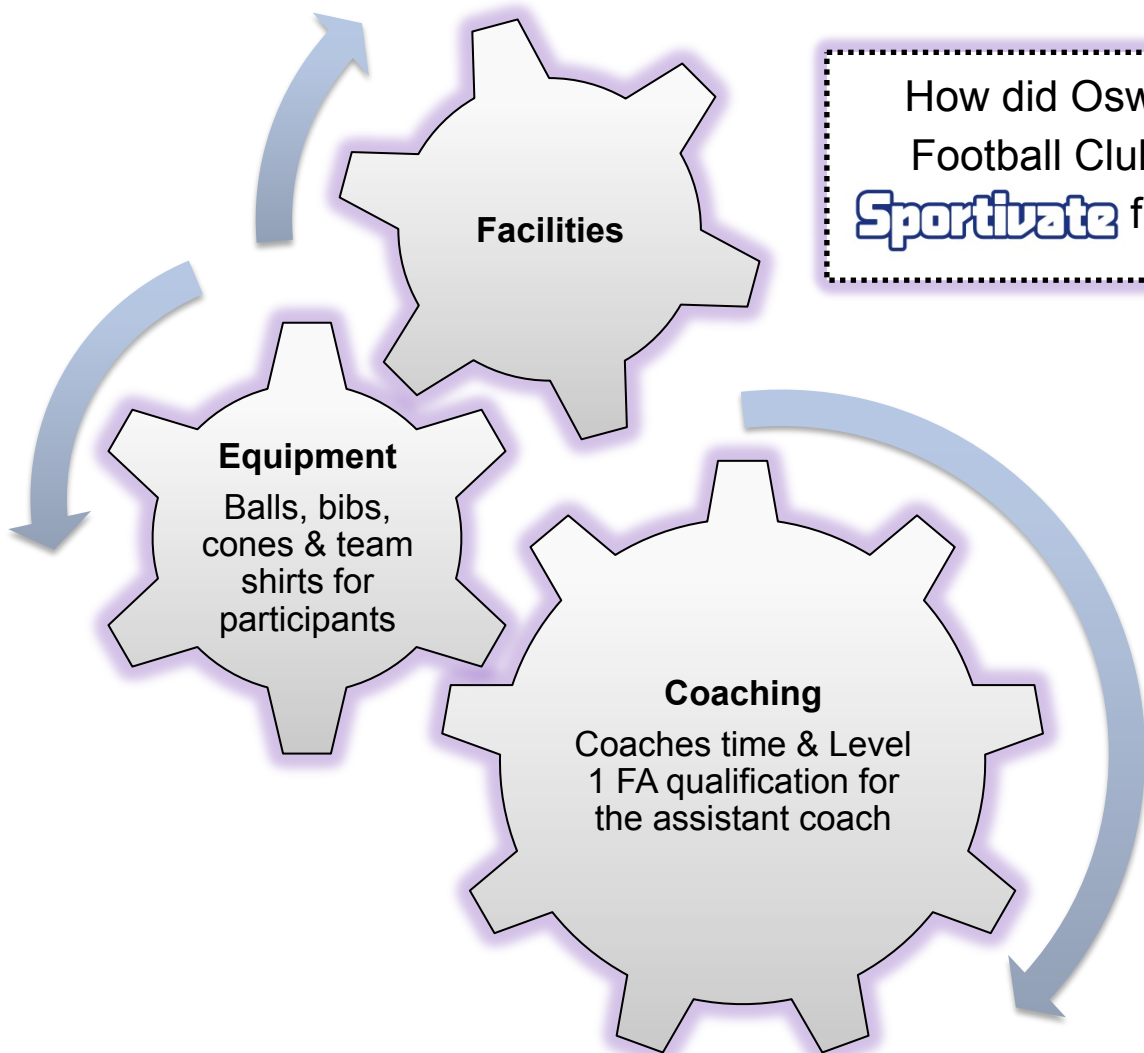
*The coach was great – he made me feel good just being there. The coach knows what he's on about*

*Helped me to focus on things and escape from crap in my life*

*Bond and trust with the team - Another family*

## How was Sportivate funding used?

Income for the project was low because participants were only charged 50p per sessions to prevent this from being a barrier. Cost per head was high at just over £125, compared to an average of around £75 per head. Sportivate funding subsidised the project's income.



How did Oswestry Football Club use **Sportivate** funding?

# What Next?

All partners and participants wanted to continue the project. A satellite club started in September 2014 to create a stronger link between the men, their community and the club.

This will involve 6 retained participants and approximately 11 further participants from nearby sheltered housing.

As part of the satellite club they will join a loyalty scheme where they receive kit and other incentives for attending sessions. The cost of sessions will be kept at 50p per person.



***“I want to start a Satellite Club because it will provide a great exit route for the lads from the Sportivate. It would be unsuitable for the participants to start playing on one of Oswestry football club teams because they have been away from formal sporting activity for so long, but it is far more achievable for them to turn up for 1 hour on a Thursday evening. That way they are still being engaged in a sporting environment which caters for their needs rather than cherry picking a few who would be suitable to progress to Oswestry FC.”*** Head Coach.



# Three months on..

Five sessions into the Satellite Club

What do the participants think of the project now?

Made new friends – get to mix with other people

Feel like a new person

More fit & healthy

Chance to take part in more sport & get out of the house

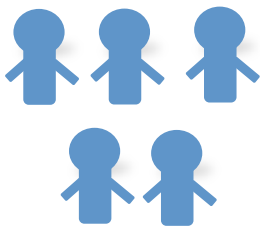
I've now been put on a training course

Keeps me off drugs

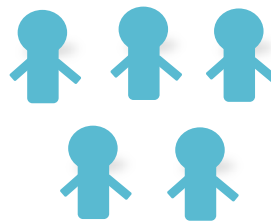
Used to be in jail and an alcoholic, the project keeps me away from both

Something to look forward to – out there doing something!

How many are still engaged?



5 out of the original 6



Plus 5 more participants from local sheltered housing



# So what's the impact?



Their case worker, the coach and the young men themselves reported positive changes from participating in the project. Using sported's Sportworks Tool we can quantify these changes as a societal cost saving from engaging young people in sport. To generate this data, information is inputted about the project's funders, partners involved, how the project is delivered, the participant's profile and participant's self reported outcomes. The Sportworks data is displayed in the chart below.

The impact scores, visualised by the bar charts, reveal the project has the biggest impact on participant's NEET status and on their educational performance. Scores of 30% or more are desirable because research indicates these projects have a higher than average impact on participants – all of the impact scores are above 30% for Oswestry Substance Misuse. These impact scores enable the calculation of a proportionate reduction in the financial burden associated with each outcome, the total social cost saving of the project is in the region of £300,000, this is based on the assumption that the young men will be supported and engaged in sport over a full life course. As demonstrated by the line graph below, by far the biggest savings can be made in the area of substance misuse.

## Sportworks Data – Oswestry Substance Misuse

