

## **CSPN Impact Awards – Active Gloucestershire**

### **Heart of the Forest Special School Gloucestershire – The development of Inclusive cycling opportunities for disabled pupils.**

#### **Project Overview:**

Heart of the Forest Special School is the only school in the Forest of Dean serving children and young people who have severe and profound needs, multiple learning difficulties and complex needs. The school has a forward thinking and pro-active approach to engaging young people in order to meet their physical activity choices and needs. Working closely with Active Gloucestershire the school has been able to develop cycling opportunities for all its pupils, and to build this into a sustainable and ongoing curriculum offer.

#### **Project Development.**

Following consultation with disabled young people the school have worked closely with Active Gloucestershire to develop a cycling project that can meet the wide ranging needs of all its pupils. To support the project development two successful funding applications were made generating £18,000. The bids included funding for staff and volunteer training, something which had been identified as a requirement to add sustainability longer term to the project. As the staff and volunteers already had a great deal of experience of working with their existing disabled pupils, it was identified that the gap in training was around cycling knowledge and skills. Active Gloucestershire linked the school to Gloucestershire's Bike-Ability training programme and as a result 18 staff and volunteers took part in a training to enable them to deliver Bike-ability cycling sessions to pupils.

The funding also enabled 11 staff members and volunteers to complete some more detailed training, the 2.5 day CTC Trail leaders Course, providing not only useful leadership skills but also greater awareness of the suitable available trails close to the school in the Forest of Dean. This meant that opportunities to cycle both at the school and off-site were created.

Key Quote; 'Thanks so much for recommending the CTC Training; it was a total blast, the staff a really enthused.' Ian Scott, teacher and cycle project co-ordinator, Heart of the Forest Special School.

Finally the project included funding for the delivery of on-going coached cycling sessions.

## **Key Project Features.**

### **Facility Development**

The project faced a number of barriers in terms of including all pupils in the cycling activity. These included not only suitably trained staff but also the necessary adapted cycles and a suitable school site on which to deliver sessions. Following AG recommendation the school successfully applied to Sport England's 'Open Spaces' fund and received £30,000 of funding to resurface the school site, upgrading an existing track that had fallen into a state of disrepair. A new 250 metre track which is fully resurfaced, accessible and suitable for cycling, was created. Via charitable donations the school also received storage containers and a selection of cycles.

### **Reach**

The development of the facility and the purchase of new equipment has helped the school towards achieving its vision of every child being able to access cycling. However an additional benefit of the development has been that the school is now able to host cycling sessions for other Gloucestershire based Special Schools who do not have the facilities to offer similar opportunities. This year Milestones Special School in Gloucester became the first external Special school to start accessing regular cycling opportunities at the site with groups of pupils.

### **Sustainability**

The activity has become a part of the schools wider recreational and educational offer with activity now sustained and maintained as an integral part of the curriculum. Buy in from senior management who have seen the results of the project has further ensured that cycling remains an important part of the school's offer with weekly sessions offered to children of all ages and abilities.

Barriers of training, equipment, and inadequate terrain have been addressed whilst knowledge and skills levels have increased.

### **Challenges Remaining.**

While huge progress has been made towards achieving the vision of every child in the school accessing cycling, there are still remaining barriers of acquiring all the necessary equipment. Further funding bids for a wider range of adapted cycles have been made by the partners and the partners are awaiting the outcome of these.