

SHINERS FC – PARTNER CLUB CASE STUDY

Overview

Shiners FC is a football club based in Wapping, Tower Hamlets. Since May 2009 Access Sport have supported them by funding a new session, new equipment to increase the capacity of club sessions, and directed 5 new club volunteers to free training courses, which otherwise they would not have been aware of. This has enabled the Club to make Tower Hamlets their base having been unable to afford to train there, and has increased the capacity and accessibility of the club that has resulted in club participation increasing from 26 to 86. The new volunteers have not only increased capacity, but have allowed the club leader to devote more of his time to the personal development of the club's players, many of whom are from single parent families and estates dominated by gang culture.

Access Sport Unsung hero – Alf Fajardo, Shiners FC

Alf Fajardo is the Club leader of Shiners FC, based in Wapping, Tower Hamlets. A West Ham fan, he grew up locally in Canning Town, and has huge passion for the sport and played professionally for Watford, Birmingham and Malaga.

When he retired he returned to the UK planning to become a football coach. Rather than doing it in the relatively affluent suburbs of Essex where he lived, he decided it would be more beneficial to do it in Wapping with the Shiners, closer to where he grew up. Originally it was all about the football – and they were successful on the pitch, but in 2007 shortly after he started, a player he was about to sign got stabbed by a rival gang and died there on the roadside by Wapping Station. This hit Alf hard and it urged him to take it much further than just football.



If you ask him what playing for the Shiners is all about he will say one thing – respect. He is adamant that players learn to how to respect their coaches, parents, teachers, and perhaps most of all, those they play with. This is especially vital as there are players from 16 different ethnic backgrounds playing for the club, and it is these ethnic backgrounds that give rise to the rival gangs that young people growing up in the estates in Tower Hamlets get dragged into.

Alf employs a unique way of helping the young people in the club to develop. He has a way of speaking to them that they can really identify with, and yet he keeps in close contact with parents, teachers and social workers to ensure that they are on track, using competitive football as their incentive: if they play truant, they don't play at the weekend.

With Access Sport's support, the club, who had lost its Tower Hamlets base, have been able to re-establish itself in Tower Hamlets at John Orwell Leisure Centre in Wapping. Access Sport have provided them with the facility and equipment that has enabled the club to rapidly expand from 26 to 86 young people aged 10-15. On top of this they have taken on 5 new volunteer coaches from the local estates, getting them trained with level 1 coaching qualifications to enable the increase in club capacity.

With Access Sport support the club hope to go on to be a club for several different sports, whilst continuing to improve the development of young people in Tower Hamlets through the sports that they love.

MAIN CASE STUDY

Club Background

The Club was originally formed in 1992, but between 2003 and 2006 the club virtually folded due to the focus of the then players turning to local gang wars. In 2007 the current club leader Alf Fajardo decided to restart the team, making it for those who have had a troubled upbringing in Wapping and the surrounding Tower Hamlets area.

Leader

The Club leader is ex-professional Alf Fajardo (Birmingham, Watford, Malaga), who grew up locally in Canning Town. He has huge passion for the sport, but is adamant that the football is secondary, as it is the opportunity to learn about teamwork, and taking on responsibility that matters. Alf had been playing professional football in Spain, but returned to the UK when he retired, planning to become a football coach. Rather than doing it in Loughton where he lived, he decided it would be more beneficial to do it in Wapping with the Shiners, closer to where he grew up. Originally it was about the football, but in 2007 shortly after he started, a player he was about to sign got stabbed by a rival gang and died there on the roadside by Wapping Station. This hit Alf hard and challenged him to take it much further than just football.

The players, aged 12-15, come from Tower Hamlets and get bussed out to Loughton in Essex for matches and training. Sessions used to be on Weds for an hour in Wapping, John Orwell Centre (£30), but this was gradually raised, forcing the club to stop these sessions. They are now re-establishing themselves in Wapping with new sessions in John Orwell Leisure Centre (at a cheaper rate), funded by Access Sport. It now runs once weekly, and in July registered 52 kids for 3 teams, up from 11 members two years ago. They have had 86 participants so far from 15 different ethnic backgrounds. They also have 5 new coaches who are being funded either by Access Sport or Recruit Into Coaching, which Access Sport directed them to. Most of these coaches have been unemployed and the club is giving them opportunity to take on responsibility in a field that they have passion for.

The Club is based in the Ward of St Katherine's and Wapping. This is one of the 20% most deprived wards in the UK (<http://publichealth.thpct.nhs.uk/PublicHealthReport/index.aspx?pid=48>), and is in the highest 2% of wards for childhood deprivation (<http://publichealth.thpct.nhs.uk/PublicHealthReport/index.aspx?pid=48>).

Youth Development / Who the Club is Targeting

Alf is particularly encouraging kids who have been excluded from school, and have had social problems, as he personally found football as a way to get away from the problems that he faced growing up. He is aware of the problems currently facing the youth in the area. In the immediate estates there are 4 main gangs, 2 of which have over 80 people in them, and in the surrounding wards there are about 30 major gangs. They run large drugs operations and suck many kids in, as they cannot be charged when under 16, therefore can be used to do the 'ground work'. If they're not in the gangs they're intimidated. Alf has spoken to teachers to discover when and which kids play truant, cause trouble in school, or don't do their work. He speaks regularly to their parents to try to make the club part of helping their improvement and development, using playing competitively on Sundays as an incentive for better behaviour. He cites respect for each other as the single most important thing that he wishes to teach all those at the Club.

NGB / Local Authority support

The Local Authority had not been aware of the club until the Access Sport partnership, although as the FA are one of the strongest NGBs they leave club development to them. Derek Bennett is the Tower Hamlets FA Development Officer, and Alf cites him along with Access Sport, as the main great sources of support he has. He recommended the club to work with as it put youth social development first and performance second. He is supportive to the club with limited resources, as there are more football clubs in Tower Hamlets than any other sport. The following is an extract from the FA on why we should support them:

"They would really benefit from any funding because they want to expand and establish more age groups and possibly girls. They are linked to a section of the club in Loughton, Essex and regularly take boys from



disadvantaged areas i.e. Wapping and Shadwell to play outside the borough. No outside funding that Derek is aware of. An element of their project is opening the kids eyes to life outside London, they play their away matches out in Essex (although this means transport is an issue)."

AS Support

The support of Access Sport has been directed at giving them a local base which they badly needed. We have funded facility hire for the pitch at John Orwell Leisure Centre, Wapping, so far enabling 58 more local young people to join the club. We have also provided the club with a full range of training equipment for these sessions (balls, cones, bibs, mini-goals etc), which has enabled them to deliver the sessions for all of the new players. Access Sport has also directed the club to coaching qualifications funded through Recruit Into Coaching, and will be funding least one further level 2 coaching course. These are all vital in ensuring all those who turn up receive a quality coaching experience, and increases the capacity of the club, as each coach enables another 20 players to take part.

School links

The Club have made no school links thus far as the focus has been on establishing a strong sustainable club first. Once they have their new volunteers qualified, and have Charter Standard, they may be able to go into schools.

Aims

To have at least 4 teams in the new season beginning in September, develop links with schools that not only may help bring more children in, but may help to engage children and their parents more in school. To make transport to their away games more cost effective. To have a sustainable local facility as a base for the club, where club members feel safe, which Access Sport have provided by enabling the sessions at John Orwell Leisure Centre.

Case Study

'KC' was a wild child, always thieving and getting drunk. He would always have to walk home from training, and look after himself from an early age, as his father was not around and his mother worked 12 hour shifts. He was excluded from school, with his headmaster quoted with saying, "I don't want that child anywhere near me". He had just started playing for the Shiners, so Alf stopped him playing on a Sunday, and decided to take the matter up with his mother, headmaster and social worker. He was slowly worked back into school, with playing football used as an incentive, and at 14 he is now is a high achiever in his classes.

Testimonials

Parent: "As a parent to one the boys who play for Shiners under 13's, all the boys play with a smile on their faces. It is NOT 'win at all cost'. Alfie the manager has made football fun. The boys are off to Holland to play AJAX OF AMSTERDAM and it will be a great way to end the season. All credit must go Alfie as he is a inspiration to all those around him." http://www.guardian-series.co.uk/sport/localsport/4252246.The_sun_s_out_for_the_Shiners/

Local press links

Tower Hamlets local paper East London Life has done a feature on the success of the club, and the Evening Standard has been in contact with Alf, although haven't run anything on the Club.

Baseline and return of stats

The Club has been up to date so far with returning stats and has shown huge increase from a baseline of 28 in April, to 86 in June with the introduction of the new sessions in Tower Hamlets.

Retention (does it have a senior section)

The club has retained all of its' players thus far. It does not have a senior section, but as the players get older, teams will be started for them to play in.



Competition pathways

Having been an ex-pro Alf has strong links with West Ham and Arsenal. These pathways are a major attraction to players coming to the club.

Grants

The club had applied for Play Sport London, which Access Sport had directed them to, but did not receive the funding for a proposed summer camp (success rate of shortlisted applicants was 19%). A Sport England grant would potentially enable the club to transport many more children out to play matches outside central London giving them a wider perspective of life, as is the Shiners vision.

Volunteer opportunities

Currently there are no volunteering opportunities as the club does not own its' own facility, although it does not have a website, and club leader Alf does most of the admin work himself, which is increasing due to the increasing membership.

Sports JAM

The Club will run open sessions around sports JAM. The event will give them an opportunity to get much greater exposure within Tower Hamlets, and make links with other clubs and organisations involved in sport in the borough.

Local Business Links

The Club has formed a partnership with the Coombe Trust, a Lewisham based charity for homeless children. This gives the players a focus outside of themselves, and they aim to hold small fundraising events to raise money for the charity. They aim to raise lots of £5.50, each of which buys a sleeping bag at cost price. In return the charity will hold an event for the club, and they are the shirt sponsors for the club. This makes the Shiners the second club in the world to have its chosen charity on its shirt (after Barcelona!).

Club Vision

The long term vision of Access Sport is to work with Alf to receive a Sport England small grant, to enable Alf to put together his dream of a multi-Sports club in Wapping, which works with the same model as his 'if you don't behave, you don't play' model. He has highlighted a potential site, with a design in mind. The short term goal is still to develop the capacity of Shiners FC, and the sustainable impact that that has, and widen it to more age groups. Although, the long term plan aims at reaching more children beyond those who's interest is solely in football.