

Tired of hanging around: Using sport and leisure activities to prevent anti-social behaviour by young people

Gateshead video transcript

Voiceover (VO): For many years Ravensworth – a private golf club in the North East – had had a serious issue with public rights of way that crossed its course.

GEOFF ROBSON

GOLF CLUB MEMBER:

One year in particular we spent £42,000 securing the course – fences and razor wire what have you.

LES WINTER

GOLF CLUB MEMBER:

Kids being kids will always find a way through a hole in the fence, over the top or underneath whatever.

COLIN REAY

CLUB CHAIRMAN:

We had everything from arson right through to every type of antisocial behaviour we'd get in here.

VO: It was war between the members and the young trouble makers – and the club turned to the police to enforce the law.

ANDY HARLE

NEIGHBOURHOOD BEAT MANAGER:

Initially we took a short term solution approach to it – arresting them – sending letters to parents – but it was clear that we had to take a long term approach to this.

VO: The long arm of the law was having no beneficial effect – so instead of trying to shut the trouble makers out – the club invited them in.

COLIN REAY:

We went out to all the local communities within the area and the schools and said if you want to join in there are free lessons on a Thursday and Friday night – and the response within weeks was absolutely fantastic.

VO: And there was much more to come. One of the favourite gathering spots for the local youth was an underpass linking two halves of the course - where all sorts was going on.

COLIN REAY:

This is quite intimidating or rather it was quite intimidating because it was a dark area and a renowned area where the kids used to gather.

CAROL-ANN GREY

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER GATESHEAD:

Graffiti, with drink, drugs – lots of alcohol – lots of bottles and cans strewn about the place.

VO: Today the Gateshead Council Community Development Officer is a member of an innovative partnership that has transformed the underpass into a place of pride to local young people.

UNDERPASS ARTISTS:

We've all done separate bits – they asked us up there what we would like to put on and all that and we chose the Angel of the North with the decks and all that up there. They worked on the top bits on the ladders cos we weren't allowed to gan on the ladders - safety.

CAROL-ANN GREY:

Well the art project was put as a suggestion because if they were keen to make a mess – they obviously hang around here – let them take some ownership. Let them do something with the place to try and improve it – and if they improved it and saw that it was really nice to be here – this is where they want to be – then we thought it was a good idea to do this.

COLIN REAY:

The atmosphere was absolutely fantastic – I mean they came here – they had their meals in the clubhouse so they got to know the golfers. People got to know these kids and realised that they weren't just here to throw bricks at them. The kids realised that the people they were encountering weren't there to chase them away.

VO: The partnership that the golf club has established with the police and the council now includes the Neighbourhood Management Team, the Youth & Community Learning Service and the Safer Community Team – Trading Standards are playing their part too.

TRACEY DONNELLY

SENIOR TRADING STANDARDS OFFICER GATESHEAD:

We do that by recruiting young volunteers, send them into shops and ask them to buy alcohol. Hopefully they are refused alcohol but sometimes they are served alcohol – in which case we do look to take enforcement action against the actual shops.

VO: And the club that was once at loggerheads with its local youth has now initiated a programme to interest young people in its sport.

SIMON OTTERSON

DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER GLYNWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL:

Hopefully by the clubs coming into school and realising that it's a resource that the community – and obviously they want them to use it but in the appropriate ways then the children will take that responsibility on board and realise that it's something that is there for them.

COLIN REAY:

Golf tends to be quite a disciplined thing – it's a self discipline - so it teaches kids how to behave towards each other. If they can take that on into other parts of their life then it will enrich everything.

VO: Recent figures show an 85% drop in antisocial behaviour around the club – and with more members – youngsters and adult – and far fewer demands on local crime prevention - this has proved to be an extremely cost effective programme for the whole community.

CAROL-ANN GREY:

The wonderful thing about the benefits to the community is that this doesn't just effect the golfers, it doesn't just effect the young people – but also we also have lots of people who come through here and they obviously see the benefit of this wonderful artwork that the young people have done and no longer see it as a threat.

LES WINTER:

We play in the evenings and you don't see the kids and groups of youths on the course that we used to – so the intimidation factor has reduced - well its virtually non existent I'd say at the moment now.

PHILIP JACK

NEIGHBOURHOOD BEAT MANAGER:

The involvement of the young people has been absolutely essential – again – because it's given them some ownership it's given some responsibility to young people and it's rubbed off on their peers.

UNDERPASS ARTISTS:

It makes you feel you proud when you come and look at it – that's my work you know

COLIN REAY:

What we've done is we've brought not just the children but the children's parents into the golf club, into the community and we've taken the golf club out into the community as well – and the good thing about it is that we're creating a better atmosphere all round for all those who live in and around the perimeter of Ravensworth Golf Club and the Wrekenton community in particular.

VO: Ravensworth now has the biggest junior membership in the area. It's sending youngsters for coaching at county level and one of its young players has just won a golfing scholarship to the United States.

YOUNG GOLFER:

If I hadn't got into golf I don't know what I'd be doing. I'd probably be hanging around street corners and stuff - and maybe probably causing trouble to be honest – so I can say that golf has probably changed my life – if that makes sense.