

Case Study



Project

CHIPS – Children Have Inclusion in Physical Sport

Organisation

Banbridge District Council

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Contact

Gillian Dewart

Contacts details

Tel: 028 4066 0637
Civic Building
Downshire Road
Banbridge
County Down
BT32 3JY

About the Organisation

The CHIPS project is run by a partnership of organisations including:

- Council Leisure Services department who provide facilities, recruit and manage the staff, and manage the programme;
- Craigavon and Banbridge Community Trust identified the prospective participants; and
- Banbridge District Sports Association funded specialist coaching for the scheme.

Project overview

The project has two key aims:

- To introduce children and young people with disabilities to their own local community's leisure services so they are confident to come back; and
- To provide respite to parents at the end of the summer when they need it most.

To do this the project consulted with social workers and families to find out what they wanted from the project and then designed a course based on these needs.

What has it achieved?

The project has run for three years and successfully completed two weeks of sessions in August during each of these years. Each session has been able to support 20 children with one-to-one support available if needed.

Each child can bring a sibling along to activities making the sessions much more inclusive.

How did the project get people involved?

Working in partnership with the community trust and social workers the project was able to target specific families and participants who would most benefit from the programme. Some of their involvement was on a short term basis but others became much more integrated into the project. This was based on their individual needs and their response to the activities on offer.

Some participants were signposted to other organisations or groups such as the Special Olympics club.

What was innovative and what worked well?

The programme continually evolved based on the needs of the participants and the success or otherwise of the activities. This meant that it was constantly able to provide what the users wanted, while still sticking to the aims of the project.

Before each of the activity blocks, considerable planning went into the programme with finely adjusted timings meaning each day ran as smoothly as possible. This was especially important with the number of autistic children on the programme, as it avoids them getting restless.



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Were there any unexpected outcomes?

The project had a greater impact than just giving people an opportunity to participate in physical activity. There were much wider reaching and long term impacts felt by the participants.

One girl who attended has behavioural problems. During the programme her discipline has improved thanks to the structured nature of the project.

Another boy has a very rare genetic condition that causes intellectual and developmental delays. He would not be able to take part in swimming without the group. His family were able to see how much he enjoyed swimming through photos in the communication book provided by staff.

The future...

Now the project is up and running it will need about £10,000 each year to keep running. It is hoped that one of the partner organisations will be able to take the project on and mainstream the funding. Another option is to use an Awards for All grant to fund the project for at least one more year.

They would like to expand the programme to target families not known to social services as this would address the aim of inclusiveness.

Lessons from the project

There are many lessons to take from the CHIPS project about how initiatives can work with children with long term severe disabilities and present opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity.

- *Programmes like this take a lot of planning and preparation. The project was delayed for a year due to the funding only being confirmed in July 2005. This did not leave enough preparation time for the delivery in August. But the delays helped the long term success of the project.*
- *Staff shortages were addressed by sub-contracting staff from Mencap. This helped with training of other staff.*
- *It is important to maintain an up to date volunteer database. The Community Trust were not able to do this due to staff changes and this had an impact on the number of volunteers available for the first year.*
- *Due to the level of disability among participants, there was a greater level of support needed for each participant. This meant that the project had to reduce the total number of people able to come on the programme.*
- *Tailoring the programme to the needs of the users proved to be a very successful approach and helped with participant retention.*
- *The level of communication between project staff, partners, participants and parents was a key strength of the project, allowing people to be fully aware of what was going on.*