

Learning, Skills and Employment

The overwhelming majority of problematic drug users are unemployed; many dropped out of education early and have never worked. LEARNING, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT are a vital part of rehabilitation. Delivering vocational services in conjunction with treatment appears to improve both employment rates and earnings.

The sports programmes allowed service users to learn and build on their social and organisation skills such as reliability and time management.

They enabled service users to improve team working skills, self management and concentration. Working within a team in turn increased confidence and self-esteem.

“Even when we are warming up and stuff like that, you might not be good at one thing or as good as the next player but in a team it gives you the confidence and it makes you a better player.” Service User, Durham

“When you play as a team it helps you, and it helps you interact with each other and it helps you to talk to each other. And it gives you confidence.” Service User, Durham

They helped service users to understand rules and why they exist and improved their ability to listen to authority.

The initiative improved clients’ ability to communicate with a wide range of different people such as key workers, coaches, referees and the media.

“Some of our service users that took part in past sessions have gone on to turn their lives around, finding accommodation and employment.” Drugs Worker, Tyneside Cyrenians.

The sports programmes helped service users to learn new behaviours such as conflict management skills and the ability to control aggression.

“There was value in team working; it gave people the opportunity to learn to work together and there was a great sportsmanship at the end, everybody shook hands no matter where anybody had come.” Service User, Teesside.

The initiative helped service users to realise that there were opportunities for them to undertake coaching courses which would not only lead to a qualification but which could, in time be a pathway into employment.

“All great successes, all great lives have involved the coincidence of aptitude, talent but also the luck of meeting people who have believed in you. At some point in your life you need someone who will tap you on the shoulder and say, “I believe in you.””
Arsene Wenger, Manager, Arsenal Football Club.

Since attending the sports programmes, 14 service users have subsequently obtained an FA level 1 coaching award with the opportunity to go on to level 2 and higher. The initiative encouraged an interest in education and learning through the interaction with the university and the coaches. This in turn can help to develop the aspirations of clients.

“Engagement I sport can help repair some of the physical damage inflicted by lifestyle, and particularly substance abuse. It can also be a route to improved self-esteem and thus more active citizenship, wider horizons and the potential for employment, and an appreciation of teamwork and partnership that will help them rejoin their community and find alternatives to offending.” North East Regional Offender Manager

Service users felt that they gained information about access to education and became more aware of educational possibilities through asking questions.

“The University is often seen as a place that only rich or very clever people go. Working with students and playing on University facilities breaks these stereotypes down and shows the University to be a place where all are welcome.” Drugs Worker, De Paul Trust, Newcastle

The sports initiative gave service users the opportunity to experience coaching and to see how this helps to teach new skills and improve performance.

“The football coaching not only helped me to develop my skills and stamina, but gave me the motivation to carry this on. I have now found employment and moved into my own accommodation and I now regularly play football once a week in a local 5 a side league.” Service User, Newcastle