How SERVES community tennis sessions in Bridlington have engaged young people to take part in regular physical activity, and given them the confidence to socialise more; encouraging a better balance of mental and physical wellbeing.

Background

The Tennis Foundation’s SERVES programme is delivered in Bridlington in partnership with StreetGames, as a strand of the ‘Positive Lifestyles’ activities run by the Sport and Play service of East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

The sessions aim to get young people off the streets and active through sport, reducing risks of anti-social behaviour in the community. The participants in the programme also develop health and self-confidence knowledge through the SERVES social change programme of activities and games relating to tennis.

Taking tennis into an area of deprivation

The area of the SERVES site is well-known for anti-social behaviour as well as low employment levels. Many of the young people who attend the sessions have been in alternative education, are from supported families and had displayed anti-social behaviour within the community.

The SERVES sessions provide an opportunity for young people from the community to play tennis for free, providing access to something many considered as being a middle class sport.

Through participating, the young people are motivated to link up with the local Bridlington tennis club, providing exit routes for progression within the sport.

Alongside the SERVES sessions themselves, the session also now provides social events for the young people to attend as a reward for their attendance.

Driving social change

The Bridlington SERVES site is part of the additional SERVES social change programme developed by the Tennis Foundation, delivering tennis-based activities that help to build self-confidence and promote a healthy
lifestyle. The outcomes of this mean the SERVES programme is playing a role in developing the participants into confident and rounded young people, and helping to improve their employability prospects.

One noticeable impact of the SERVES programme, particularly from the games focussing on teamwork, has been the improvement of the social skills of the young people in the group. Some less vocal participants have now become more vocal and leaders within team activities, and participants have built new friendships.

From anti-social behaviour to role model

James, who attends alternative education, is a regular participant in the SERVES session. James has been known to hang around with the wrong crowd on the streets in Bridlington. He struggles with his behaviour in an educational setting and doesn’t have the best relationships with his teachers.

Over time, James has developed new friendships at SERVES. Developing these friendships helped James keep out of trouble and each week he is becoming more of a role model within the session. The SERVES self-confidence modules have helped James improve his communicational skills with others, with him reducing swearing and engaging more positively with his friends by giving them motivation and encouragement.

James’ dad has also said that James is starting to enjoy school more and gets on with his teachers a lot better.

Rebuilding confidence and self-esteem

William left a local Bridlington school due to experiencing bullying. This experience had left him with low self-esteem and confidence. His new school is out of town and therefore does not make it easy for him to socialise with any of his peers out of school. He is a regular SERVES participant, and the structure of the sessions has helped him when making new friends out of school and helped him improve his social skills with others. The sessions have also helped with the development of William's self-confidence.

Nurturing self-belief

Emma, who attends the SERVES tennis session on a regular basis, didn’t really value her ability at tennis even though the SERVES Tennis Activator at the sessions could see real potential in the way she played.

Over the weeks taking part in the different tennis activities and games she has shown improvement in different aspects of the game, giving her more self believe. Emma now helps out with demonstrations of activities, whereas before she would not have put herself forward.

Emma took part in the tennis social event in February and went onto win one of the main trophies for the competition. She claimed “Wow, I didn’t expect to win anything when I attended today”, with it really making a difference to her confidence.
Making new friends

Jhia moved to Bridlington from Spain only eight months ago, and being new to the area, didn’t really have many friends. The SERVES self-confidence modules have helped Jhia build new friendships. This has then helped Jhia with his school life as now he feels more confident when making new friends at school.

Jhia is someone who has shown big improvements in his skills at tennis and is always up for a challenge. He has built up his self-confidence and is now really starting to believe in his own ability. While continuing SERVES, Jhia’s confidence has now seen him also join another local sports club to play football, so it is really positive to see him expanding his out of school activity.

Community impact

Overall the Young people are really starting to show vast improvements when communicating, with each other and staff, when building relationships, showing increased levels of confidence and self-esteem. This is all linking to reduced anti-social behaviour within the area, along with them developing skills to take on into later life when looking to find jobs or heading into further education.

Future plans

The next step for the Bridlington SERVES site is to run the health modules of the social change programme, with the hope this will make as significant a difference as the confidence models have with the young people.

Beyond that, the plan is to look at delivering more social events around the SERVES sessions, with visits to tennis matches or providing other opportunities to the young people to help them with future development.