A SERVES Project Story:
Wigan Youth Zone

A Trip to The British Open: How being a part of SERVES led to future tennis opportunities

Background

OnSide Youth Zones are designed to provide young people aged 8–19 (or 8-25 for those with a disability) with somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to in their leisure time. These sessions serve to occupy participants, both physically and mentally – by providing fun activities, new skills and the opportunity to socialise within a safe and positive environment. OnSide Youth Zones work to support young people in deprived areas - areas where the alternative may involve spending an evening out on the streets or surfing the web alone in their bedrooms.

Wigan Youth Zone is a purpose built, state-of-the-art and centrally-located youth facility opened in June 2013. It offers young people from Wigan the opportunity to meet friends, enjoy new experiences, learn new skills and access the support that they need to develop and to achieve their potential. The project’s aim is simple, to provide the town’s young people with somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to when they need it most.

Becoming part of SERVES

As a national partner of both OnSide and The Tennis Foundation, StreetGames was well placed to introduce the SERVES programme to Wigan Youth Zone. Following an initial meeting, Wigan Youth Zone completed a SERVES delivery plan, and by June 2018, had received tennis activator training and all of the equipment necessary to begin delivery.

A Trip to The British Open

Shortly after beginning programme delivery, The Tennis Foundation offered participants the chance to see the world’s top wheelchair tennis players in action, at the British Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships! The event, featuring some of Team GB’s own medal-winning Paralympians and Wimbledon hopefuls, offered SERVES sites the chance to take part in tennis, wheelchair tennis and other forms of disability tennis.

Wigan Youth Zone immediately recognized what an amazing opportunity this would provide for their young people – opting to transport seven of their SERVES participants by minibus to the event in Nottingham on Tuesday 21st July 2018.

This was the first time that the young people had seen professional tennis players performing in person. The trip was a
fantastic way to link the group's community SERVES sessions to a mainstream competition, and left all of seven attendees feeling enthused, stating:

“The players are amazing! Just because they’re in a wheelchair, it hasn’t stopped them performing to a high level!”

“I’ve had a brilliant day, I want to play more tennis!”

Discussing the trip, Wigan Youth Zone Sports Coordinator Ian Gaskell commented:

“It was a great opportunity for our young people to not only watch the athletes on court but to also join in fun games and activities. Our young people were of various abilities and needs and thoroughly enjoyed the day. They got to see some amazing athletes and it showed them that no matter what, anything is possible!”

The Next Shot for SERVES

Through SERVES, Wigan Youth Zone is now looking to utilise the support of OAKs Consultancy service to submit a small grants bid. This funding will allow them to run additional tennis sessions, hire an apprentice, purchase more tennis equipment and up-skill their volunteers to gain LTA level 1 and 2 coaching qualifications.

They are also eagerly looking forward to their next opportunity: attending the North West SERVES Festival!