Volunteering has always been important for Blaenau Gwent’s StreetGames project. When the project first started delivering sessions in 2009, they found that they had a much better response from young people when the sessions were led by local young volunteers. The opportunity to have three full-time volunteering placements through the BT Supporters Fund was a natural progression for them. Victoria Price, one of the project coordinators, said that they were keen to have three NEET young people from their own local authority area so that they could give them more support, training and new opportunities. Victoria said that they wanted the young volunteers ‘to be in a good position to apply for jobs that might come up’.

Tom, one of the three full-time young volunteers, started his placement at the beginning of May. He’d been helping out at the project for the last four years when he’d left College and couldn’t get a job. Tom said, ‘It’s hard where we live, it’s a deprived area, quite hard to get a job.’ Tom knew that this placement would give him new experiences, skills and training and the chance of a job afterwards.

The project staff were keen to help the young volunteers benefit from their placements as much as possible, combining new qualifications with training and gaining new experiences. The initial focus for the full-time volunteers was to set up at least one new StreetGames session in each of their wards. Tom said that he had already started to plan a new multi sport session on Friday evenings at the local all-weather play area - ‘rounders, rugby, whatever the kids want’. He was making the bookings, arranging the equipment and recruiting other volunteers to help out at the session.
The project was keen to make sure that the three young volunteers benefited from their placements as much as possible. Their first formal training opportunity was going to be at the StreetGames National Young Volunteering conference at the end of May 2014. Victoria was keen for the young volunteers to take part in some training, build their own confidence, meet other young volunteers and bring back new ideas to their project. Tom said that he was ‘going to do some training on multiskills and youth action at the Conference and would see what else was going on’. The young volunteers were also going to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow as a reward for their hard work at the project. Tom said that he just ‘can’t wait!’ He said he was going to deliver some StreetGames sessions to the young people up there at the ‘residential camp’ at the Games and that he’s hoping to see some of the events. As Tom said, ‘I hope I can, just to get the experience, not often you get to go to an event like that with work’.

The three young volunteers were also going to attend the StreetGames residential trip in October where Victoria said they would have the opportunity to meet young people from different areas, develop their teamwork skills, broaden their horizons, take part in the outdoor adventure activities and do some training as well. Victoria said that they’d also arranged for the young volunteers to do the StreetGames workshop for managing challenging behaviour and ‘would of course get their hoodies, they like the affiliation with StreetGames, they see it as a thank you for what they’re doing’. This was in addition to the mentoring support that they would receive from the Project’s Active Young People officers who would support them whilst they set up and run their sessions and help to put the learning from the training into practice - ‘they’ll meet them regularly, discuss their work plan, give practical coaching/ sports leadership tips, support them with admin and time management’.

Tom said that the training and support was important, ‘I’m going to get as much training as I can….as many qualifications as possible’. At the end of the six-month placement Tom wanted to run his own massive StreetGames festival with lots of young people and also apply to work at Camp America next summer. Tom felt positive about the next six months as he knew that by the end of the next six months he would be able to ‘show what I’ve done and achieved and get full-time employment. I want to go into sport and coaching and would travel to Cardiff if I can.’

**StreetGames**

StreetGames is a centre of expertise for developing doorstep sport in disadvantaged communities.

The charity supports community based sports projects that deliver sport and volunteering opportunities to young people living in the 20% most deprived wards in the UK.

StreetGames works with National Governing Bodies of Sport to establish and develop links between community and mainstream sport. Recognised by the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games Inspire Mark, StreetGames is creating a lasting legacy of doorstep sport in the UK.