



CASE STUDY

THE POWER OF YOUR LOCAL NETWORK – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

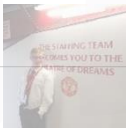
Ashton United in the Community is the bridge between Ashton United Football Club and the local people of Hurst.

Based on local issues identified by current and potential new club members, the club's community section was set up in 2015. It is a registered charity.

A key area of its work is to connect to the local network by offering volunteering opportunities to support projects, events and community activities.

"We have 70+ volunteers around the club. These volunteers are students, family members of players, supporters of the club who want to help out as volunteers – or simply local people. It's a huge group reaching out into the local community but more importantly everyone is getting something out of volunteering; that's absolutely critical. The volunteers feel valued and are achieving personal goals through their work on behalf of the football club. The club are getting fantastic returns too. But it must always be a two-way street."

Steve Hobson, AUITC Project Manager



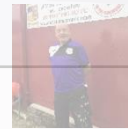
70+

REGISTERED VOLUNTEERS FROM ACROSS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



20+

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS ARE CONNECTED INTO THE PROGRAMME



10+

INDIVIDUALS HAVE GAINED EMPLOYMENT AS A RESULT OF VOLUNTEERING

LOCAL NETWORK

Our volunteers have a wide range of backgrounds and play a vital role in supporting a number of projects that tackle challenges people face across a broad spectrum of issues. These issues include deprivation, poverty, loneliness, isolation, poor health and wellbeing, community safety, lack of



Education, as well as unemployment, which is sadly prevalent in the neighbourhood. All these challenges need addressing, and the community section, alongside its volunteers and partners, plays a vital part in combating all these issues. This positive effect not only benefits the wider community and football club, but also the individual volunteers.

Volunteers have defined objectives from giving up their time, whether that's to give back to their local community, develop their own personal skills and attributes, or providing support to others.

“This type of work doesn’t happen overnight, but it does happen locally. Understanding who and what is on your doorstep is crucial.”

LOCAL ECONOMY

Having the platform to enable volunteers to grow and develop, has been further recognised by local community groups, charities and other statutory providers. This has enabled greater local volunteer networks to be built, supporting the community on a much wider scale.

The expanding networking and collaboration across different local organisations and groups needed to be better managed. Recognising this enabled funding to be accessed for a Community Development Manager. This role did not previously exist, but came as a direct result of the positive work, connectivity and collaboration across local community-minded organisations. The role was identified and grant-funding secured as the charity was able to demonstrate local need and significant positive social outcomes.

With strategic direction, the number of projects is growing and the community engagement capacity of the club and charity increases exponentially.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

As a result of this work, capacity has grown and is now more public-facing. New roles are being created, bringing forward new volunteers with new knowledge and skills and supporting new outcomes.

Greater connection and collaboration with other community groups has brought in additional funding streams. In addition, connected groups are now customers of the club, utilising social spaces, meeting rooms and catering services.

As well as the positive PR shared from the expanded role the club now plays in the local community, it’s also having a positive impact on the football side. For example, there are new junior teams, a ladies’ team and greater numbers of people accessing the clubhouse and attending matches.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS



Understand what skill sets you and your volunteers already have.



Explore your local network to identify the skills’ gaps and opportunities to fill them.



Ensure the right people are in the right roles. Look at the skill sets of your current volunteers to see if they would be better suited to a new or different role.



Connect with your local community to help source volunteers/support for areas of the club where you have skills’ gaps.



Mutual benefits have to be in place for all parties. It’s a two-way street!

“We are changing lives by what we are doing. We’ve had students join us who have taken on media projects within the club and then gone on to gain full-time employment within the football industry because of the skills they gained with us. We also supported an individual who hadn’t been in work for 12 years. He came to us in a volunteering capacity and worked tirelessly at the club. He was unable to produce a CV and was nervous about attending interviews, so we helped him with that, built up his confidence, and I am proud to say after 12 years he is in full-time employment and now a paying supporter of the football club..”