

Away win for Ipswich Town

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Ipswich Town Community Trust produced an away victory when they won the prestigious “Loving Learning” Award for their project “Sport4Choice” at the East of England Celebrate Awards, held recently at the The Cut, Halesworth.

The awards celebrate the achievements and difference made to peoples’ lives by projects funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) over the past seven years.

The Sport4Choice project is funded by ESF through the Learning and Skills Council Suffolk and helps people in Ipswich who want to improve their reading and maths skills through sports-related activities.

Sacha Brakenbury, Learning Manager at the Ipswich Town Community Trust said: “We are really pleased to have won this award and be recognised for our innovative approach to learning. This project uses the motivational power of sport to engage and encourage learners who might otherwise not access a more traditional approach to education. The project uses high profile sporting venues including Ipswich Town Football Club home ground at Portman Road and the National Stud, Newmarket to deliver sports-themed learning. Activities have included improving writing skills by producing match reports from the press box, boosting maths skills by analysing match statistics and developing confidence by carrying out mock press interviews. Our team have worked extremely hard to make this project a success for each and every learner.”

Adult Education Tutor Annie Brown, also from the Trust added: “The project has helped people far in excess of those originally planned, including training some to work in sporting environments as adult learner support assistants.”

Julia Barrett, ESF Contracts Manager for LSC Suffolk said: “ESF helps people who need additional support to enter work by helping break down barriers and develop their potential by training people who lack basic skills and qualifications.”

Commenting on the result Julia said: "The news that the Sport4Choice project had won the Loving Learning Award was greeted with screams of delight from the ESF team and we're looking forward to the well-deserved trophy being paraded at a future home game."

John Parkin, a literacy student who took part in the Sport4Choice project and a student endorsement for the Love of Learning nomination, said: "In my time with the course I have found a very warm and caring teacher who gives a 100% of her time to all students. For myself, I have found that after years of being told that I was no good and being put down, I have somebody who would believe in me and that I was a lot better. If anyone is wondering if they have the ability just try it out, you may be surprised what you can do, I was, I know that!"

In addition to this winning entry, the "Learning Champions" project led by the Akenham Partnership was short-listed for the Best Use of ICT Award, whilst Liam Woods from the Connexions-led "Twilight Hours" project was short-listed for the Turn Around Award.

The Celebrate Awards are held every year by Government Office for the East of England and the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and awards are given in 12 categories, with an overall winner chosen from amongst them. Other categories were Environmental Impact Award, Regeneration Award, Best Use of ICT Award, All Inclusive Award, Local Transformation Award, Tourism Award, Enterprise Award, Loving Learning Award, Love to Learn Award, Community Spirit Award, Turn Around Award and the award for Outstanding Contribution to European Structural Funds. This year, nearly 120 nominations were received across the region.

In 2005, Ciril Devereaux from the Suffolk-funded "Dido" project won the Pride of the Region overall award for an individual that best sums up the success of the European funding programme.

END

Notes to Editors:

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Further information on the Sport4Choice project contact the Learning and Skills Council (Gemma Morgan on 01473 883041 gemma.morgan@lsc.gov.uk) or from Ipswich Town Community Trust (Kerry Hawes on 01473 400589 kerry.hawes@itfc.co.uk)

Photo – Annie Brown from Ipswich Town Community Trust “Sport4Choice” receiving the Loving Learning Award from Laurie Heselden, Regional Policy & Campaigns Office for the South Eastern Region Trades Unions Congress.

TV

Anglia TV 6pm news covered the award on the day. Detailed TV coverage is on the Anglia news website (www.itvlocal.com/anglia) and is under News Extra (search “Celebrate Awards”)

Case Studies

Justin Ashford

Leaving school at 14 with no qualifications, Justin was reluctant to return to a learning environment that had hindered him in the past. Unemployed and working as a volunteer at a cafe in Norwich, Justin, an avid Ipswich Town fan, came across an advert for the Sport4Choice course in a match-day programme. Keen to see what was on offer, Justin began the course without a qualification in maths or English.

Benefiting from the relaxed and inspirational environment on offer Justin managed to achieve his Numeracy Level 1 having failed several times in previous attempts before joining the course. Going to the Planet Blue Shop gave Justin the opportunity to improve his mental arithmetic and work on percentages alongside touring the ground and checking the use of maths and symbols.

Having done a Level 2 course in IT previously, Justin made good use of the IT facilities on offer using Excel to produce pie charts and downloading worksheets from the BBC Skills website.

Justin’s new found confidence in learning and numeracy Level 1 qualification will hopefully help in him finding permanent work.

Christopher Hutton

Unemployed, Christopher Hutton, 47, was a nervous person lacking in self-confidence. That soon changed once he joined the Sports4Choice project, transforming himself from a being illiterate to a bit of a word detective. Humiliated in the past, Chris now looks positively to the future. He now has the confidence and skills to read because he was encouraged and worked hard.

Sports4Choice

Sports4Choice courses are run at Ipswich Town Football Club and this allows for a unique learning experience with learning taking place in an Executive Box overlooking the pitch and also state-of-the-art IT facilities in a specifically designed classroom. Learning also takes place outside of the 'classroom', with practice interviews in the media suite, a tour of the ground and many other activities designed to motivate the learners. The courses offer flexibility and are offered during the day and evening on several days. Students are free to attend whichever session suits them and this allows for changes in shift patterns or changes in circumstances.

LSC

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

ESF

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of four Structural Funds designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union. www.esf.gov.uk

ESF's main purpose is to support the annual UK Employment Action Plan, which sets out how UK policies and initiatives take account of the Employment Guidelines established within the European Employment Strategy. ESF is channeled through three Structural Fund [Objectives](#) and the [EQUAL](#) Community Initiative.

The current programmes run from 2000 to 2006. ESF will provide about £4.5 billion in Great Britain (£3.5 billion in England) in this period.

The European Social Fund aims to:

- help unemployed and inactive people enter work
- provide opportunities for people at a disadvantage in the labour market
- promote lifelong learning
- develop the skills of employed people
- improve women's participation in the labour market