

'Danny'
a Positive
Future's success
story, reconnected to
education via a
passion for football



OFFCUT 2

Positive Futures is a Home Office-led, sports-based programme for marginalised 10–19-year-olds living in the most deprived or high-crime neighbourhoods in England and Wales. Local agencies including drug action teams, schools and voluntary agencies refer suitable contacts to projects run by 107 local partnerships. Their aim is to reconnect alienated youngsters with education, training and employment, and in particular to address issues associated with problem substance use. The plan is for a mainstreamed, long-term presence rather than a series of one-off initiatives. Methods vary, but include sports coaching and competition, outreach and detached work, music-related activities, drug awareness and education, leadership skills and mentoring, and activities in schools and pupil referral units.

The first impact report from the government ¹ draws on an evaluation by MORI, which judges the programme effective in engaging its target population ². MORI estimates that from 2000 to August 2003, nearly 35,000 young people had been engaged and that the numbers had grown by a third since February of the same year. At the time of the report, over 12,000 were involved, on average 200 per surveyed project, though for most engagement was described as 'casual'. Diversification into non-sporting activities was evident but sport – and especially football – dominated. Problems included staff continuity and a marked divide between projects in their abilities to tackle substance misuse, an issue now being addressed.

In the past year projects reported that over 6100 youngsters had become more socially included at least by improving their engagement with the project, nearly 300 were now volunteering for Positive Futures or other projects, around 150 had gained employment and many more were looking, hundreds had gained awards of various kinds, and about 900 had joined sports teams or clubs.

¹ Home Office. **Positive Futures impact report**. 2004. Copies www.drugs.gov.uk/NationalStrategy/YoungPeople/PositiveFutures.

² MORI. **Key elements. Year 2, wave 1: final report**. Home Office, 2003. Copies as above.