



1. Background

The South London Special League is an award winning successful community based project that enables players with disabilities to participate in football and compete at a level appropriate to their ability.

The league ensures people with a learning Disability have the opportunity to play on a regular basis, competing at each age, gender and ability level for an annual cup. In turn this raises the awareness and involvement of the local communities to the skill of the players and their determination to succeed.

The league was set up in 2000. Since this date some 900 boys and girls have experienced the fun of playing football. The project has been managed since its inception by Sharon Brokenshire and has received a variety of awards for excellence that demonstrate the level of commitment of the management committee.

Awards include:

London Football Association Development award for Disability Football 2003,
London Development Agency Sports Awards: Best Community Project, February 2005
CARE (Charlton Athletic Race Equality) Partnership Sports Awards
December 2005 for Adult project

Junior Divisions

MLD (Moderate learning disability) under 11 (mixed)
MLD under 12
MLD under 14
MLD under 16

MLD girls under 14
MLD girls under 16

SLD (Severe learning disability) Under 19
SLD under 16
SLD under 14

SLD girls under 19

Aim

The aim of the South London Special League (SLSL) is to provide competitive football for

people with a learning Disability at whatever level they are able to access the game.

The league is made up of a range of divisions appropriate to age, gender and ability. They come from schools throughout South London and NW Kent: Dartford-Isleworth and Hillingdon

Each Junior division meets twice a term, normally at Long Lane Junior F.C. The league works on a points system added up from the matches played over the year, ending in a League Cup Final for each division in June/July.

About 10-12 teams play within each of the male divisions and 6 in the 2 girls divisions. Normally 10 play in the mixed under 11 division. We record approximately 80 -150 individuals per event.

Last summer the girls were successful at the London Youth Games., coming third overall. This year, I hope they can win.

Coaching and one off projects

Over and above the league tournaments we offer coaching to some of the Greenwich groups.

Thanks to funding from CARE Partnership ; one of our coaches, Wayne Blake is presently offering coaching to Waterside School, primary school for children with severe behaviour problems and autism.

Greenwich Wanderers Girls Club

The SLSL runs a Club for girls with Learning Disabilities. This club is based at Long Lane JFC. During the winter it trains at Waterfront Leisure centre It is open to any girl with a Learning Disability of secondary age in the borough.. .

At present the girls come from Thomas Tallis School, Plumstead Manor School. Churchfield School, Crown Woods and Charlton School. As the club grows, we will divide into sessions dependant upon age.

Although this year we will concentrate on competition from friendlies against some of the Selkent Teams, other LD teams and SLSL league tournaments, next year it is our aim that the girls will enter the Selkent League in their own right.

Last summer the girls were successful at the London Youth Games., coming third overall. This year, I hope they can win.

ADULT LEAGUE

This year it was our plan to develop an adult league for people with a learning disability to offer them the opportunity to join a football league that celebrates playing grass-roots competitive football on a regular basis.

This was launched with a successful Festival at Long Lane on which occasion teams and individuals were introduced how the league will run. Each level of ability can access the sport

at an appropriate division, Championship 1, Championship 2, and League. They play small-sided football on a regular basis.

Within our community opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to play regular competitive football are very limited. Strategies come and strategies go, mostly failing.

It is essential that they do not feel threatened by the idea of playing in a competitive situation. Fair Play and having a good time with no over-riding pressure to win must be the ethos that is strongly reflected. Even so, winning is the greatest high these players will experience.

Increased motivation is reflected in improved levels of fitness and hence, self esteem and heightened aspirations. By opening up the world of football to these people, their lives could be changed by just increasing their expectations and broadening their experience.

Already 18 different teams have participated, with others looking forward to taking part in the future. They are both local, from Greenwich, Lewisham Bromley and from further afield, Lambeth, Wandsworth, Waltham Forest, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Enfield