



SHIELDFIELD COMMUNITY CUP

The Shieldfield Community Cup (SCC) is a unique, inclusive 5-a-side football competition based in the heart of the Shieldfield Community, the Napier Street MUGA (Multi User Games Area).

Why is it unique? Teams are made up of varying mixtures of local kids of all ages, 5 - 15, all genders, all abilities, students, Mums, Dads, grannies, people with learning difficulties, even one lad playing without his lower legs - all coming together through the "Awesome Power of Kicking a Ball About".

The aim of the game is not winning, it's about giving everyone a chance to participate and to celebrate Shieldfield's diversity and spirit - and the kids probably get that more than the adults! It's beautiful to see some of the more skilled teams naturally rein in their talents to allow a less polished team a chance to shine. Everyone gets several games. Each team chooses their own name, gets team-coloured bibs, and we do an opening ceremony en masse on the pitch with a Mexican wave and a lot of cheering, and a final trophy presentation involving spraying fizzy water and a very makeshift trophy.

History

The idea for the SCC bubbled up from grassroots, from a local lad Mahamat Younis, aka Mo, as part of an artist residency Andrew was undertaking with Shieldfield Art Works. The residency culminated with a screening event at the Star & Shadow Cinema, which included several films made by people from the Shieldfield community alongside archive footage of the area. Afterwards a discussion was held to find ways to connect S&S more with local community and Mo suggested that football might be a good way to do that. Mo, Andrew and I then came up with the format, Andrew designed a great logo with the 3 Shieldfield towers, and the 1st Shieldfield Community Cup was born.

The first time, we had no idea whether anybody would actually bother to turn up - after much leafletting, only one team had registered in advance, and we expected a humiliating lack of players.

But, on the day, over 50 people enthusiastically turned up to play, plus about 100 spectators. It was a life-affirming day. After, when several people said to us "you need to do this again!" - it was obvious we were onto something.

And now, 6 years later, it always amazes us how it comes together like a well-oiled machine. More people have got involved, as individuals, and as organisations.

S&S have always generously provided funding as a "S&S volunteer event" which is without strings and non-intrusive and much appreciated, as have NewBridge Project recently.

We have been approached by several outside organisations who want to piggyback on the success of SCC, but their offers usually come with strings such as sponsors' names on bibs or posters - we haven't accepted any, it works great as it is, and we keep our autonomy.

After the first year, it grew to include local based community groups rooted in Shieldfield - The Star and Shadow Cinema obviously, but also the essential skills, resources, people and advice provided by The NewBridge Project, Dwellbeing Shieldfield, The Shieldfield Youth Program, the Forum Cafe, and Shieldfield Art Works. This has been invaluable in spreading the load and allows us to concentrate on the day on the football, as well as providing a unique occasion that brings all of these organisations together to collaborate, sharing knowledge and resources, for mutual benefit and collective joy.

The enthusiasm for this event is tremendous and it keeps growing - it's hugely gratifying to see some of the older kids and local parents getting involved on the day. We want more to get involved.

This year we wanted to expand the free food offered on the day, and we brought together the wonderful S&S Community Kitchen to collaborate with Dwellbeing's Shieldfield Community Chefs, using S&S's kitchen to prepare a fabulous range of tasty free food.

I think it was an eye-opener for the Chefs to realise that yes, S&S is a resource they can use, and this is already bearing fruit in proposals to collaborate between CK, S&S and the Chefs.

Through connections made since the football started, Newbridge Shieldfield Youth group now make regular use of the S&S venue and cinema for talent shows, films and other events.

I think it's not an exaggeration to say the Cup has been instrumental in helping build bridges between the local community and local organisations.

And it reaches further than that - people have come up from as far away as Stockton to play, having heard about it.

And all this through APOKABA - the Awesome Power of Kicking A Ball About!

Richard and Andrew