

BEYOND THE PITCH: MY LIFE'S IMPACT THROUGH FOOTBALL



MyLife

EMPOWERING PEOPLE THROUGH FOOTBALL



A season of inclusion and growth

Every Wednesday and Thursday, a remarkable transformation takes place on a small pitch at Standish Leisure Centre.

At first glance, it looks like a typical football session: passes being exchanged, shots being taken, laughter and encouragement ringing out from the sidelines. But My Life's football sessions have become an extraordinary, unique story.

This is a group of My Life members that started with just a few players who simply wanted a space to play the sport they loved with their friends. It quickly grew into a dynamic community of up to 20 participants each week. Players of all abilities, each with a unique background and journey.

And while football brings them together, and they've even won trophies, it's the sense of being part of something which makes My Life's team so special.



"It's actually not just about the football," says Martin, one of the coaches. "It's about being together, working as a team, and discovering ourselves."

From the very beginning, the coaching philosophy for the football sessions aligned with My Life's wider vision and ethos, grounded in equality, respect, and potential. Martin Lowe and Karen Platt treat every player as someone with abilities just waiting to be nurtured.

Sessions are structured in six-to-eight-week blocks, each cycle focused not only on developing football skills, but also on building leadership, confidence, and personal growth.

The sessions are highly adaptive. Whether a player uses a wheelchair, requires 2:1 staff support, or simply needs some time and space to engage, there's always a place for them on the team. No one sits out. No one is left behind.



A GAME PLAN FOR INCLUSION

That belief has created a ripple effect, unlocking potential in players who, just a short time ago, might not have imagined themselves as athletes or teammates. Patrick, for instance, now takes part in group warm-ups, counting confidently to ten as the team stretches and prepares. "He's amazing," says Karen. "You can see how proud he is."

Thomas, once hesitant to speak, now contributes regularly, both on and off the pitch. He recently ordered his own dinner over the phone for the first time, a moment that would seem small to some, but was a huge leap forward in his journey. "We call him the Tommy Torpedo," Martin laughs. "His shots are brilliant."

Then there's Jonathan. When he first joined, he was quiet, withdrawn, reluctant to interact. But today, he positively beams when he plays. His confidence has grown alongside his skill, and he's found a space where he feels not just welcome, but vital.

"I love being with the My Life team," he says. "It makes me so happy when we do well."

"If someone says they can't do it," Martin says with quiet conviction, "I push back on that a little. I believe there's always something they can do."

SMALL VICTORIES, BIG WINS

As much as the group values individual growth, they've also become a formidable force on the pitch. They've now won three football tournaments, a testament not just to their talent, but to their teamwork and perseverance.

"They amaze us each week, they now never say 'can't' - they are always positive and go into everything with a determined 'belief'," says Karen.

In one particularly memorable final, the game came down to penalties. They narrowly lost. But what stood out wasn't the result, it was the way they responded. They congratulated the other team, honoured a teammate who had recently passed away, and walked off the pitch with heads held high.

"That, to me, is bigger than any trophy," Martin says. "The sportsmanship, the maturity... that's what this group is all about." What makes their progress even more impressive is how far they've come on the pitch. "We used to lose 11-0, 12-0," Martin remembers. "Now we're competing. Really competing."



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The effects of the group reach far beyond the pitch. Players are eating more healthily, becoming more physically active, and building skills that impact their daily lives. Steven, for instance, has started helping prepare healthy meals at home. Luke, whose fitness has improved dramatically, now runs laps around the site that once left him winded.

Jack, who uses a walking aid outside of sessions, chooses not to during football, which has helped improve his balance and mobility.

Phil beams when he talks about the weight he's lost and the goals he's scored. "I am so happy when I'm doing football," he says. "It makes me feel good."

There's a warmth that radiates through the team, a sense of mutual support and pride. "I like helping and getting behind all my friends," says Daniel, one of several players who has emerged as a team leader. "It feels good to do well."

Ryan, always ready with a joke and a smile, even brings a gameshow atmosphere to sessions. He creates fun challenges and drills that have everyone laughing.

"That's what it's all about," says Karen. "Joy. Fun. Connection."

Jamelia, known affectionately as "The Superstar," plays with fierce determination. "She would win any tackle," Martin says. "She gives 100% every time."

Then there's Evan, the team captain. Thoughtful, kind, and quietly confident, he's a role model for everyone around him. "The My Life team gave me a sense of my life back," he says. "It helped me be the happy person I am today."

MORE THAN JUST FOOTBALL



BUILDING THE FUTURE, TOGETHER

As the group continues to grow, Martin and Karen are working on new ways to celebrate each player's journey. Plans are in motion to create short profiles that capture each participant's personality, achievements, and dreams.

The same group have now taken up golf too, having tuition every Friday at Gathurst Golf Club, where My Life is the Captain's and Lady Captain's Charity of the Year. The group were in an Adventure Golf Tournament on Monday 14th July at Haigh Hall, where they competed against 11 other teams in their group and, yes, you guessed it, they won that too!

The team is also - once again - nominated in the Wigan Council Believe 'Team of the Year' awards to be held in September.

"We want people to see what's possible," Karen says. "There are so many assumptions about what people with disabilities can't do. This group shows what they can do - and it's incredible."

One of the most striking things about My Life's football group at Standish Leisure Centre is how it has redefined success. Winning games is great, of course. But the real victories happen every day, when someone speaks up for the first time, when a player helps a teammate through a tough moment, when someone leaves the pitch with a new sense of pride in who they are.

As Robbie puts it: "I like having fun and doing my best." In those few words lies the essence of what this team is about.

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A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE WINS

In a world where inclusion is too often an afterthought, My Life's football team through My Life Opportunities offers something rare, beautiful and profound: a space where everyone is seen, everyone is valued, and everyone belongs. Football might be the medium, but the message here is much bigger. It's about friendship, growth and empowerment. It's about being together.

To be honest, I think any person, whether they've played at the highest level or the lowest level in sport, could all learn something from these beautiful individuals and just actually see what life's all about," says Martin. "That togetherness they have is beautiful."

And on the My Life football pitches, together means everything.

Every session is a chance for each player to grow in their own journey, guided by our coaches and inspired by the unwavering support of their teammates.

Read this story and you'll see what a difference My Life Opportunities is making to Michael, Daryl, Phil, Jack, Abbie, Patrick, Luke, Thomas, Sam, Anthony, Steven, Evan, Robbie, Ryan, Joshua, Gareth, Jack, Ciaran, Jamelia, Paul, Jonathan, Daniel, and Leon.



THE LEWIS NELSON ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

In honour of Lewis, we have introduced a very special trophy - The Lewis Nelson Achievement Award. We will always remember Lewis as a truly remarkable young man with a heart of gold.



The Achievement Award was presented for the first time to Team Captain Evan at our Excellence Evening and is open to anyone for nomination, not just members of the football team.





MICHAEL

COOL: ★★★★★

"I like football and passing the ball and being with the team." Michael can pick up new drills really well and always keeps a cool head.



DARYL

THE ROCK: ★★★★★

"I like playing in tournaments and in training sessions and being with Martin and Karen, they're the best coaches!" Daryl is the rock at the back of the pitch and such a good tackler. He really helps out the team and gives his all.



PHIL

FITNESS: ★★★★★

"I am so happy when I'm doing football and am happy with the weight I've lost and scoring goals." Phil has got so much fitter doing the football sessions and has lost a significant amount of weight due to his hard work. He always puts a smile on everyone's faces with his passion for the game.





JACK

LEADER: ★★★★★

"I really enjoy football and being with Martin and Karen and they have helped me so much and I look up to them and I like trying to impress them."

Jack is a brilliant leader and has a real passion for his football. He is an example to all that anything is possible if you try your best. Jack uses a walking aid which he chooses not to use during practice, this has helped with his balance.



ABBIE

ENERGY: ★★★★★

"I like doing football with my friends, I like being with Karen and Martin because they are my heroes."

Abbie talks a lot about communication and how important it is, she brings so much energy and enjoyment with her attitude and her progress has been amazing. Abbie has lost an amazing 3 stone – she maintains her weight loss through this activity.



PATRICK

PROGRESS: ★★★★★

Patrick loves being with his friends and has progressed so much, and even helps with the team warming up, and counting in the exercise drills.





LUKE

CONFIDENCE ★★★★★

"I like passing and running, and counting at football and being with my friends."

Luke's progression has been amazing, he's worked so hard on his confidence and fitness. He can now run 3 times round the pitch and can run from the bottom of site, up to the gym which he wasn't able to achieve before.



THOMAS

THE TORPEDO: ★★★★★

"I enjoy being with my friends and teamwork."

Thomas' speech and confidence is getting better week after week. Thomas even orders his own dinner over the phone which is a big achievement. On the pitch we have a name for Thomas and his strikes - Tommy Torpedo.



SAM

LISTENING: ★★★★★

Initially Sam was reluctant to engage, he is now progressing week on week and his listening is getting better all the time. He seems to really enjoy being with the team.





ANTHONY

DISCIPLINE: ★★★★★

"I was so happy when I saved the penalty to help win the tournament."

Ant has learned self-discipline and controlling his frustrations. He is an amazing goal keeper and such a big part of the team. He has conquered many fears along the way with a big smile on his face.



STEVEN

HEALTHY DIET: ★★★★★

"I like being with Martin and Karen and they help me a lot and I like being with my friends." Steven has come on so much and always listens. He has also started helping at home preparing healthy meals which we're so proud of. Healthy diet is a big part of the football sessions and we try to promote that as much as possible.



EVAN

CAPTAIN: ★★★★★

"The My Life Team gave me a sense of my life back and has really helped me be the happy person I am today." Evan is not just an amazing player, our team captain but most importantly he is an amazing young man. A true leader who helps all his teammates and a true star to work with.





ROBBIE

FOCUS: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"I like having fun and doing my best."

Robbie is yet another example to all that anything is possible. She gives her all and her focus is top drawer.



RYAN

JOKER: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"I like doing football with the group and the quizzes."

Ryan brings a gameshow to the session and comes up with brilliant ideas. He thinks up fun new drills – Ryan makes us all laugh and that's what it's all about.



JOSHUA

STRENGTH: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"I love football and Preston because they are the best like My Life."

We have worked on Josh's balance and co-ordination and this is improving. He is also another big voice on the pitch and an incredibly strong young man.





GARETH

GOALS: ★★★★★

"I like being with Martin and doing football and goals." Gareth brings so much love and enjoyment to the session. His listening skills have come on so much – he makes everyone happy.



JACK

HUMOUR: ★★★★★

"I enjoy being with my friends and learning new skills." Jack does the session with a big smile on his face from start to finish. He is definitely one of the comedians of the group.



CIARAN

SCORER: ★★★★★

"I like helping others out and getting behind my friends." Ciaran is yet another leader of the team and is a wonderful player that can score from anywhere. He is an amazing young man and we can see his confidence growing each week.





JAMELIA

THE
SUPERSTAR: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"I like passing, shooting and tackling."

The super star as I call her, is a person who gives her all and someone I wouldn't want to go into a tackle with as she would win every time.

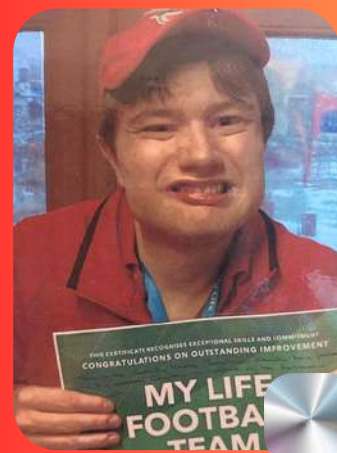


PAUL

SPEED: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"I like the session as it makes me a better player and a better person"

Paul is lightning fast and such a good player. He is another one who helps all his team mates out which is lovely to see.



JONATHAN

HAPPINESS: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"I love being with the My Life Team - it makes me happy when we do well."

Jonathan has come on so much with his communication and confidence, and also his ability as a player. You can see the joy in his face when he's with the group. Jonathan was initially very withdrawn and didn't interact much with his peers or staff - he seems to have found a place to flourish in the team.





DANIEL

ENCOURAGER: ★★★★★

"I like helping and getting behind all my friends and enjoy when I do well and do my best." Daniel is another leader of the team and really encourages all his teammates and is a big voice on the pitch.



LEWIS

HEART OF GOLD ★★★★★

Lewis was a young man whose presence lit up not just the football pitch, but every room he walked into. He was a truly wonderful person with a heart of gold, and we are all so lucky to have shared in what was one of the happiest times of his life here at My Life.



LEON

FREEDOM: ★★★★★

Leon is always happy on the pitch and has so much energy. He loves kicking the ball around. Leon has 2:1 staff at all times; the sense of freedom he has when he can run around the pitch is clear to see.





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My Life Support Standish**

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