



Bus Drivers Getting Physical

Employer: Stagecoach North East - Hartlepool

Area: Physical Activity

Theme: Physical Activity



From the initial survey carried out it was decided the staff of Stagecoach in Hartlepool really wanted our silver award to be tailored around physical and social activity.

With this in mind we looked for an activity that was inclusive to all staff, whether they be male, female, old, young, fit or unfit we wanted something everyone could participate in, and the general consensus was Football.

""After playing Football every Thursday night for 6 weeks I could really feel my fitness improve, but as someone that has just turned 50, and with a competitive nature, I felt I need to do more to compete with the younger guys. I've now started running twice a week as well, and I feel better than I did in my 40's""

Initial interest was good, 14 volunteers to play at what would become our adapted football home, Brierton Sports Centre in Hartlepool. We decided to play 7 a side for 60 minutes. (maybe a latey



ambitious to begin with) Thursday evening seemed the best suited for every one wishing to attended. Bibs and Balls were bought and men ranging from 19 to 56 all purchased new football boots for the first time in a long time. The buzz around the Depot in the build up to that first game was incredible, even the people not wishing to play wanted to join in the excitement.

Kick off. 6th April 2023 It was a long hard 60 minutes and by the time the full time whistle had blown we could barely speak, or walk for that matter, we had all over estimated our skill and maybe fitness levels, but we worked hard, and as much as we all retreated to our cars briskley there was a sense of achievement that a group of generally unfit bus drivers from varied back grounds had come together outside of their normal work environment and had fun together.

The following day the football group chat set up on Stagecoach's information platform Blink was a never ending stream of constructive criticism and future planning. (it has been ever since) The group couldnt wait for the next session and as it was the topic most talked about around the Depot interested increased. The following week we had 16 players, the week after 17. numbers have dropped occasionally because it isnt always possible to make everyone available to play, but the enthusiasm never seems to go away.

Word spread and our neighbouring Stagecoach Depot, Stockton heard about our footballing exploits, (or lack of some might say and challenged us to what will now be the annual Stagecoach in Teesside cup. We had a month to prepare, the 4 games we played in the build up to that game seemed more intense than ever, fitness levels were improving dramatically, some of the guys had taken to training alone to gain extra fitness, I personally began swimming twice a week, thats how competitive we had become, and on the day it show. The match was held at Goals, Stockton and as much as we ran our socks off Stockton were victorious, but that didnt dappen our spirits. We all left the pitch will a sense of togetherness you dont get from simply being work colleagues, and improved health and fitness that wouldnt be possible from the cab seat of a bus. I was personally proud of every member of my staff, not just the people that participated but also those who came to support the team.

After the success of the Stagecoach Teesside cup we have organised a Stagecoach Northeast league with teams from our Newcastle, South Shields and Sunderland Depots all participating. We are have a minimum of two games left in the tournament and currently sit joint top of our league, so please wish us luck.

In summary, what was intially a group of 14 generally middle aged men looking to lose weight and get to know their colleagues a little better, has turned in to something massive. Our health has improved, our mental health has improved, the minimum of one hour per week where we can forget our work or personal stresses and just do something we love is priceless, but possibly the most impressive aspect of it all is, Stagecoach's Hartlepool Depot the smallest in the region has inspired employees from 5 Stagecoach Depots across the Northeast to realise that bus driving does not have to be an unhealthy profession and it does not have to be done in isolation.



""As the oldest member of the team I was worried I would maybe embarrass myself playing with younger people, but we mostly started at the same fitness level and it really pushed me to improve mine" "

""I have had problems in my personal life, and I really think the friendships I have built during football has really helped my through them""

""Luckily for the Depot only the boss has suffered any kind of serious injury haha""

