



Chelsea at work in the community: goalkeeper Petr Cech takes an active part at a community launch, while John Terry meets young cancer patients



Premier programmes

We're one of Europe's biggest clubs with some of the best-known players in the world, but we also have so much to offer the community in Surrey, says Chelsea's Head of Corporate Social Responsibility **Simon Taylor**

Most people have a firm view about Chelsea. The club has been called many things, some good, some bad, but what is overlooked all too often is the work that goes on behind the scenes.

Through our Football in the Community Department, we have created a series of initiatives bringing more than just football to hundreds of thousands of young people every year.

On a national and global level the club helped raise almost £4.4 million for good causes during the 2006-07 season, while last year Chelsea players and staff were part of more visits to more community programmes than any other club in the Premier League.

We are also the only club to have signed up to the Mayor of London's Green 500 initiative, an environmental programme for leading businesses to reduce carbon emissions. As a result we have pledged to lessen our carbon footprint by 10 per cent both at Stamford Bridge and our training complex in Cobham.

The training facility has been designed with the environment in mind. The buildings feature unique designs to minimise their visual impact, we have planted over 3,500 trees and shrubs and installed a water recycling system to collect and reuse water for pitch maintenance.

The Cobham ground now boasts state-of-the-art facilities for our community department from which we offer a variety of activities which underline our commitment to our local community in and around Surrey.

Using the power and popularity of football we hope to bring a host of social benefits to young people of all backgrounds regardless of gender or ability.

Since the team moved to the area four years ago, thousands of local children have received free in-school coaching and after-school sessions with Chelsea's team of qualified coaches. Our community team also works with local schools to deliver healthy eating programmes and to promote the benefits of an active lifestyle.

As Chelsea captain John Terry said: "We see loads of young kids down at our training ground which gives us all a big buzz. We all feel these visits are an important part of being a footballer and we are proud of the work we do off the pitch."

The club also runs a series of successful Soccer Schools throughout Surrey, providing fun football coaching sessions for children during school holidays. Players of all abilities are welcome to come along and join in the fun from beginners to more accomplished players. Children from the age of four are also welcome on Chelsea 'mini-kicker' courses. Operating at East Molesey, Dorking, Guildford and Camberley, as well as the Cobham training ground, the schools have proved hugely popular.

Our very own Joe Cole took part when just 11-years-old, working on his skills at an early age.

"I was really keen to get on one being a Chelsea fan," Joe recalls, "and I went out there and had great fun really having a go."

Away from the playing side of the game Chelsea also provide successful community and education courses designed to pass on the benefits of healthy lifestyles as well as campaigns to prevent crime, drug abuse and anti-social behaviour.

We have found that football can be much more than just a game. Using the game as a delivery vehicle, football can act a catalyst to deliver a range of social programmes specifically designed to motivate and educate.

Working alongside local partners such as the police and youth offending services we are in the process of designing schemes to offer young people in Surrey who are deemed at risk of offending the opportunity to take part in programmes run by Chelsea coaches. Similar schemes operating in London have helped reduce crime by up to 60 per cent.

As part of the programme participants will also be offered the chance to gain coaching and leadership qualifications, opening up the potential of employment and offering positive opportunities that may have been previously denied to them.

Our move to the area has been one that as a club we have been delighted with. People in Surrey have been extremely welcoming which has made us more determined to give something back and be a good neighbour.

People will always have their own opinions about Chelsea, it's something that will never change and makes the football the great sport it is. But we are a club fully committed to our community and will continue working tirelessly for the people of Surrey. ●