

PRESS RELEASE

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HOMELESS WORLD CUP TRIALS

OPEN trials are taking place across the country to find England's best homeless football talents to make up the national squad for this year's Homeless World Cup in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The Big Issue in the North is once again managing the England team for the event, and this year has support from Working Links, who are coordinating a nationwide football festival to raise funds for the 2010 England squad.

Football clubs and venues across the country are kicking off trials to fill the squad of eight which will fly out to South America for the tournament in September.

The Homeless World Cup is a competition that aims to use the power of football for the purposes of social inclusion, to highlight the issue of homelessness and to transform people's lives around the world.

Trials for selection are taking place at four locations in London in February and March. To be eligible, players must be:

- Homeless or vulnerably accommodated at some point after September 1 2009
- Or in rehabilitation and have been homeless at some point since October 1 2009
- Or asylum seekers currently without positive asylum status or were previously asylum seekers but obtained residency status after September 1 2009
- Players can be male or female and need to be at least 16 years of age on September 1 2009

Trials will take place at:

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|---------------------|-----------------------|------|
| • Chelsea | Wednesday 17 February | 11am |
| • Charlton Athletic | Wednesday 24 February | 11am |
| • Tottenham Hotspur | Wednesday 3 March | 11am |

Later this year, Working Links will continue its partnership with The Big Issue in The North to coordinate a nationwide football festival to raise funds for England's Homeless World Cup squad.

Richard Brown England Team Manager from *The Big Issue in the North* said: "Taking part in even the first round of trials is a fantastic opportunity for people. It's the first chance to be a part of this year's squad, a journey which can be literally life changing for those taking part."

Richie Ellison, Working Links' Sports Development and Social Inclusion Manager, said: "We are delighted to be supporting England's Homeless World Cup squad. We are passionate about the work we, and our partners, do to change the lives of those 'socially excluded'.

Anybody wishing to take part in the trials should download an application form from www.bigissueinthenorth.com

Ends

For more information, please contact Communications Officer Dawn Bunnell on 0161 227 0205 or email dawn.bunnell@thebiglifecompany.com

Notes to Editors

The Homeless World Cup 2010 will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, this September. The Homeless World Cup (www.streetsoccer.org) is an international street soccer event that highlights the positive power of sport by creating a unique setting for homeless people and people in poverty. Mel Young and Harold Schmied created the concept in 2001 at the Annual International Network of Street Papers Conference (INSP), which works on practical solutions for homelessness and poverty. Founded in 1995 the INSP today acts as a network for more than 60 street papers world-wide.

In providing excluded people with access to football, the feeling of belonging, challenge of working in a team, the process of regaining a health orientated attitude towards life, self esteem and last but not least the experience of fun.

Members of the England team do not have to be selling *The Big Issue in the North*, but they do have to have been homeless at some point since the end of the last Homeless World Cup tournament.

- Working Links was founded in 2000 and operates in 184 locations across England, Scotland and Wales. It is a unique organisation that delivers services to tackle social exclusion and poverty by helping disadvantaged individuals and communities.
- The organisation's belief that employment is the best route out of poverty has helped more than 130,000 people back into work which is one person every seven minutes of the working day.
- It is a public-private-voluntary company. Its shareholders are the government's Shareholder Executive, Manpower, Capgemini and Mission Australia. It delivers effective solutions by working in partnership with organisations including the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus, and the Probation Service.
- Profit is not Working Links' only driving force. Its shareholders endorse its social purpose and are interested in how Working Links can create long term value, investing in the quality of services and the communities where it operates.
- Working Links helps and supports people who face significant challenges and barriers such as those who have been unemployed for a long time to former offenders, lone parents and older workers. It also works with employers and the prison and probation services to help prisoners in over 20 institutions.
- By helping the most vulnerable in society to improve their skills and help them move into jobs with a future, Working Links can create a greater sense of social inclusion. This leads to better health, education, reduced crime and brighter futures.
- When Working Links was founded in April 2000 its shareholders decided a proportion of profits should be reinvested to support the communities where works. The Links Foundation was subsequently launched in 2004 as a charitable trust to distribute this Community Reinvestment Fund. Since then, more than £1.7million has been invested. And more than 137 projects across Britain have benefited.

www.workinglinks.co.uk