



## STOMP Kids Clubs

### Background

The STOMP network is a series of community based inner-city kids clubs in Sheffield run by St Thomas' Church Philadelphia. They provide children in school years 2 – 6 with a safe environment where they can have fun, learn about Jesus, and develop a greater sense of self worth. The clubs are based on a model developed by Christians working with children in deprived areas of New York City, who would never dream of going to church. STOMP has been working with disadvantaged children in Sheffield for over ten years, and currently has four clubs running in Shiregreen, Firth Park, Langsett and Parsons Cross. STOMP volunteers, motivated by a desire to show God's love to children very much in need of being loved and valued, usually come into contact with one hundred and fifty children each week, one hundred of whom are regulars at the clubs. Katie Smith who oversees the STOMP network has been working for St Thomas' Church Philadelphia for a year, but originally got involved with the clubs five years ago as a volunteer.

### Responding to a need

Katie says that many of the children they know through STOMP have stigmatised views of themselves because of their backgrounds, thinking **'I'm just a kid from an estate...I can't do anything'**. This is either because other people have directly said such things to them, or they've inherited these views from parents who grew up thinking this way. Katie and the twenty strong team of STOMP volunteers want to dispel these wrong attitudes among the children and develop their sense of worth.

**'It is so important that STOMP is a place where kids can feel really valued'**

The team aim to help the children feel valued by loving them, listening to them, and giving them a chance to just act like children.

**'A lot of them live in tough environments and are forced to grow up very quickly. It is great to see them running around at STOMP where they are safe to act their own age and just be kids, free from the responsibilities and concerns of home.'**



### PROFILE IN BRIEF

## STOMP Kids Clubs

#### Services offered:

- Weekly kids clubs and home visits giving children the chance to have fun, play games and learn about God

#### Who do you work with?

- Children and families in communities across Sheffield

#### Contact details:

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Katie says that a number of children are sulky and withdrawn when they first come to STOMP. When they come to realise that STOMP is a safe place and that they can trust their leaders, they begin to really come out of their shells. She tells the story of one boy who when she first met him was an aggressive five year old with bad language. He started coming to STOMP and is now a regular at the club. He responded really well to the structure, direction and support that STOMP provides children with, and is now a sweet boy, whose language has totally changed. Katie says,

**'When you get to know the children you can't help but love them'.**

## Engaging with the community

STOMP leaders don't just see the children one evening a week, but also visit kids from the club, and others they have relationship with every week in their homes. These visits help the STOMP team to build relationships with children's parents and are an important part of STOMP. They help create a sense of community and an atmosphere of trust, as well as making the children feel really valued by members of the STOMP team. As most of the children live in busy housing estates, visits often involve meeting and talking with the STOMP members' siblings and friends. This means the STOMP volunteers have become groups of recognised faces in the communities they work in.



Katie tells another story of a girl who started coming to STOMP, and because she would talk so much about what she'd learnt at STOMP her dad and later her mum started going to church again. The support they received strengthened their own relationship so much the whole family has benefited. STOMP doesn't just support children, it can help to strengthen and support entire families. Alongside weekly STOMP clubs, the committed team runs a number of family and community events and take assemblies at local schools.

When children get too old for STOMP, they are encouraged to join **St Thomas' Philadelphia's inner-city youth work 'Firestorm'** where they can continue to receive support and encouragement as they get older. Some are also invited to stay on at STOMP as 'youth helpers'. The responsibility of this helps the older children to grow more in faith and character, and strengthens the sense of community at STOMP.

## Looking ahead

Katie and her team are planning to set up more STOMP clubs in estates across Sheffield where nothing currently exists to offer children the support that STOMP does. She is also looking to develop a number of smaller groups within each STOMP club where children can build deeper relationships with leaders and friends