



# SPORT UNLIMITED

“Although they were only doing a small amount of sport, now they’re actively involved in sport 3 or 4 nights a week”

**Andrea Wood**  
Heartlift Wrestling

## OLYMPIC WRESTLING

During the first year of the programme in Greater Manchester, funding through Sport Unlimited enabled Bolton Sport, Health and Inclusion, in partnership with Heartlift Wrestling and the two School Sport Partnerships, to deliver ten weeks of wrestling sessions at two schools in the Bolton borough. During the Autumn and Spring terms, 142 boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 16 attended the two schools’ sessions, with only one not attending in at least six of the weeks.

At Harper Green School in particular, the standard proved to be extremely high. As a result, a team from the school entered an inter-school competition organised through Heartlift, together with the Bolton and Wigan Competition and Partnership Development Managers. Despite many of the other schools in Wigan and Bolton having significantly more experience of competitive wrestling, Harper Green finished a fantastic fifth place overall.



Heartlift Wrestling is based at the Olympic Wrestling Club in Aspull, a small town a couple of miles north east of Wigan. Heartlift was set up by Andrea Wood, a former criminal solicitor and daughter of the coach who set up the Olympic Club, and today provides outreach work, an art studio and various other types of support alongside the main focus of wrestling. Part of the organisation’s ethos is to use wrestling as a vehicle to engage under-achieving or disaffected young people and to channel their energies into a disciplined and rewarding sport. This makes it a perfect fit with Sport Unlimited’s stated aim to engage the “semi-sporty” in regular physical activity.

To encourage the sustainability of the programme, all of the ses-

---

sions run by Heartlift in schools across the Bolton and Wigan areas feed into the main club at Aspull and, from the first few weeks of the programme, children from Harper Green began accessing the club. In some cases this meant young people catching two buses across from Bolton to Aspull to attend.

In the school holidays, three of the young people even gave up their time to support Heartlift's disability camps, where the Harper Green wrestlers volunteered as mentors to young disabled participants. The boys showed exceptional empathy towards their mentees, worked with real maturity and enthusiasm, and made a positive impression on all involved in the camps.

One of the participants that began wrestling at the Harper Green Sport Unlimited sessions and moved on to wrestle regularly at the club in Aspull, has gone on to great success. Prior to attending the sessions, Wade Barrick certainly fell into the partially engaged category, having previously tried boxing and Thai boxing without ever taking these up on a regular basis. However, with the wrestling club Wade found a sport that truly hooked him, and he responded by demonstrating great talent by going on to achieve a bronze medal for his category at the British Junior Championships, and a top five finish in an international competition held in Kruiabeke, Belgium.



Since then, Wade has now started work with Heartlift and is training to become a boxing coach, all as a result of attending those first wrestling sessions at Harper Green.

[www.greatersport.co.uk/changinglives](http://www.greatersport.co.uk/changinglives)

This work is part of 'Bringing 2012 Legacy to Life'