

Community Sports Coach Scheme Case Study

Case study profile

This case study examines the role of a part-time Community Sports Coach (CSC) in the development of netball opportunities for young disabled people in Birmingham, focusing specifically on curricular and non-curricular coaching delivery, effective relationship building with special schools and programme sustainability.

Area

Birmingham

Project description

For many years, it had been widely acknowledged, that there was a lack of sports activities for young disabled people in the Birmingham area. A demand for disability netball had been identified through the Active Sports programme and as a consequence, the Netball Development Officer began to focus on targeted coaching activity for the 11–14 age group. In 2004, the Community Sports Coach Scheme (CSCS) presented an opportunity to address a recognised coaching need through expansion of the disability netball programme to a wider age group, 5 to 19 years.

The aim of the CSC is “to increase participation in netball by young disabled people”. The longer-term goals of the project are to provide quality netball coaching within a club environment, thereby widening opportunities for young disabled to participate out of school hours.

The CSC position has been jointly funded through the CSCS (50%) and Birmingham Sports Action Zone (SAZ) (50%) for a period of three years. Key partners engaged in the project include:

- England Netball
- Birmingham Special School Sports Association (BSSSA) – comprising representatives from 10 schools for children with learning disabilities
- County Sports Partnership (CSP) - Birmingham Sports Partnership
- Birmingham SAZ
- special schools in the Birmingham area.

On advertising the post, the CSP encountered initial recruitment difficulties and it is believed that these were linked to the part-time nature of the role, equating to only 7.5 hours per week. However the lack of applications led Birmingham Sports Partnership to explore alternative solutions and resulted in a positive outcome in identifying the opportunity to deploy one member of staff across two part-time posts.

The CSP put forward a proposal to the Netball Development Officer who confirmed that she would be interested in carrying out the role alongside her existing responsibilities. Julie Gibson started in post in September 2004 and is seeking to maximise opportunities to build on her development work in the game through the provision of quality netball coaching.

The CSC has worked predominantly in partnership with the BSSSA to raise awareness of coaching opportunities and deliver disability netball coaching sessions within 10 special schools. However, word of mouth promotion has led to the development of links with a further eight schools.

Six curricular or lunchtime sessions are delivered at each school over the course of one half term. As a part-time post, it has been necessary for the CSC to liaise and work closely in conjunction with other coaches to ensure that the planning and delivery of the programme is fully resourced. This structure also allows for repeat visits to the schools over the life of the project.

It is considered important to allow flexibility in the delivery of the programme and courses are co-ordinated carefully with class teachers. Sessions can extend beyond the six-week period where teachers feel that it is beneficial to continue with netball rather than to introduce an alternative activity. This is very much dependent on the nature of pupil's disabilities, which can impact significantly on the children's attention span. For example, children at a specialist autistic school have benefited enormously from participation in the netball coaching and have taken part in 18 consecutive sessions.

The CSC feels the programme has worked very well in all of the schools involved and emphasised the importance of learning from class teachers to gain a better understanding of the sensitivities of working with children with disabilities. She has used this experience to develop greater awareness of children's capabilities, which she has found highly valuable in enhancing session planning.

The CSC has carried out an important mentoring role for teachers by providing support and instruction on the range of skills required to coach young people. This will help to increase the longer-term sustainability of the coaching programme by ensuring teachers are able to deliver a similar level and standard of coaching in the future. In addition to the curricular coaching programme, the CSC has introduced after school netball sessions to further expand coaching opportunities for children with mild learning disabilities. Organisation of one-day netball festivals has encouraged schools to come together and provided pupils with the opportunity to use the skills they have learnt in curriculum time, benefit from further coaching and interact with a greater number of young people.

Key achievements

Several key outcomes reinforcing the success of the disability netball coaching programme are:

- the CSCS has enabled children across a wider age group to benefit from participation in disability netball activities

"... CSCS ... will give me the opportunity to be more people focussed and the opportunity to learn more about disability sport"

CSC

"... the feedback has been excellent – we are now looking at options of how we can roll this out across other sports"

**County Sports
Partnership
Manager,
Birmingham
Sports
Partnership**

- 162 young people with wide ranging disabilities (learning difficulties and physical disabilities) have regularly taken part in netball coaching sessions delivered by the part-time CSC over the first eight months of the programme
- feedback from teachers at special schools has emphasised that young people participating in the programme have benefited through:
 - gaining increased confidence in sports skills
 - positively responding to involvement in team games
 - experience of new curriculum activities
 - opportunities to interact with children from other schools at organised festivals.
- the CSC has provided a positive role model for teachers and teaching assistants and vice versa.

Key success factors

Key factors driving successful delivery of netball coaching for young disabled people by the CSC include:

- close partnership working with the BSSSA which has facilitated relationship building with special schools and supported positive and swift progress from the outset
- co-working with the network of other coaches in the area to enable delivery of a broader and more sustainable programme of activity
- full support and endorsement received by England Netball which has further strengthened the profile of the programme
- the ability to deliver sessions at no cost to schools, together with a clear recognition of the value of participation in sports specific sessions, are believed to have contributed strongly to the good response received from special schools
- Makayla Hutchins (Birmingham Sports Partnership) reported that the CSC's style of delivery, enthusiasm and motivation have been major factors resulting in the sessions being a very positive experience for all those taking part
- a structure in which coaches have worked alongside teachers and teaching assistants has ensured that essential classroom support is available to address the behavioural needs of the young people
- the existence of a registration process for each session has allowed the collection of quantitative data to inform effective monitoring of the impact of CSCS.

Lessons learnt

The main lessons learnt in the initial period of programme delivery are:

- the part-time nature of the CSC post (equating to 7.5 hours per week) has been a key constraint, which not only resulted in initial recruitment difficulties but does not allow sufficient time for administration/planning plus delivery of the project – it is suggested that current interest in the programme would justify resource equivalent to 15-20 hours per week during term time
- a number of barriers have been encountered in relation to the successful delivery of after school sessions:
 - transport issues can severely affect children's ability to attend, both those travelling to and from school on organised transport at set times as well as those relying on their parents
 - the need to have teachers and teaching assistants present can lead to problems with availability and increased time pressures and commitments for staff
- attempts to set up a club for young deaf people were initially hindered by communication problems, but the CSC is keen to progress this initiative by enlisting the help of a team of interpreters and this forms a key part of the CSC's future programme of delivery
- with concentrated delivery during term time, the CSC recognises that there is a need to increase the number of coaching hours delivered during school holiday periods - the CSC is proposing to establish a summer coaching scheme which will offset the lack of curriculum delivery as well as benefiting young people by providing a valuable opportunity to participate in netball sessions out of school.

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